

Religion and Reality

G.M. Syed

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DEDICATION

I am dedicating this book to the great saint and mystic of Sind, Hazrat Shah Enayatullah Soofi, who is also known by the title of Shah-e-Shahheed.

He sacrificed everything which he possessed and waged a war against religious prejudices. To quote a Persian couplet:

*"Gone is my head in the way of God.
Verily, it was a great burden for me".*

Ghulam Murtaza Syed

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This book is unique in its subject matter. Only a man of Mr. Syed's wisdom and stature could have presented the theme which this book contains. Beyond doubt, the truth that the writer has unearthed, is nothing but a manifestation of his own inner truth and boldness.

Mr. Syed has written this book neither to please nor displease anyone. But it is the sum total of the profound thoughts of an old man who is now an octogenarian.

This book was first of all published in the Sindhi language in '67-68. After its publication, men of negative thinking raised a hue and cry. But, at the same time, very many people with sane mind, appreciated it well. However, on the pressing demand of readers, its Urdu version was published in June, 1972. The rendering into Urdu was made by Mr. Akhtar Rizvi, the noted linguist and a trusted friend of Mr. G.M. Syed.

Ever since the Urdu version dawned on the horizon, readers started pressing for the translation into the English language. This translation was made by late Prof. Dr. Ahsan Farooqi. But for a number of years, the matter lay dormant and this book could not see the light of the day for various reasons. However, this book is now being presented under the caption "Religion and Reality". It is hoped that the readers who are the best judges, would be kind enough to give us their valuable suggestions.

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PREFACE

By nature, I am a man of strong feelings. It is probably why that I have been deeply inclined towards religion. There was a time when I was a strict observer of prayers and fasts. My chief practices were night vigils, prayers, rigours of self-confinement, visits to the shrines of saints, association with dervishes, seeking guidance from sublimated spiritual men, making of offerings, persuading people for prayers, constructing mosques and preaching religion, etc.

All the time, conventional beliefs and prejudices of religion clogged my mind. I believed that my own salvation and that of the whole mankind lay in faithfully following the faith. Those who did not concede to my viewpoint, I considered them accursed and doomed. But the foundations of prejudices started shaking when I came in contact with the followers of other religions, held discussions with them, studied their scriptures and pondered on the reality in its broader context. Thus, the veil of hatred and narrow-mindedness which had obstructed my vision, was removed. Finally, there appeared big cracks in the iron-wall of my puritanism.

An account of this change and its cause has been given in

my book entitled "My Story, Told by Me".¹ Suffice it is to say that, in addition to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's religious approach and his belief, the scientific study of materialism, history and philosophy, widened my vision. At last, the experience of temporal love changed the course of my feelings. Thirty-five years ago, I related this experience in the closing pages of my essay entitled "Wordly Adventures"² through the following words:

"Love had played its magic on me. Diversity was lost in Unity, yet an inward voice sounded, telling me that it was not my final goal. Gradually, the evanescence of life dawned upon me and I perceived that 'I do not love the temporary'. It was that stage when the sordidness of the sensual desires had been clear to me, and finally, craving for the lust had subsided. The heat of blood had also cooled down. Feelings too had lost their intensity. I reverently said a 'good bye' to worldly love. Then I started searching a higher object for devotion."

"That was indeed a painful task. Before that, I had seen the Reality in its worldly shape and it was somewhat comforting. Now all was blank and invisible was the higher object. Nothing appealed to the eyes as a good substitute. Restless was the heart. At last I became an ascetic. I renounced the world. Detached from all temporal bonds, I began to pass my time in contemplation of God."

"During the days of my renunciation and devotion to God, I perceived a new image of worldly love. My heart began to throb. It was that object for which I had been long in pursuit. This time it appeared in the form of an ideology rather than an individual. It led me from unity to diversity."

"Formerly, Marvi was pining for her beloved, Khetsi. But, afterwards, in place of Khetsi, she began to remember her relatives and countrymen. Marvi was a native of Thar. Her

1. Apni Kahani, Apni Zabani.

2. Majaazi Marhaley.

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love had centred on her people. My country is Sind, my love revolves round my countrymen. This was a development of worldly love. In other words, the feeling of love remained the same, but the beloved changed; intoxication was the same, pleasure was different; wine was the same, cup-bearer was different."

After that, the change that occurred in me, can be measured from my addresses to various societies of the Sufis in Sind. On the occasion of the Conference held at the village called Dhuthro, I declared:

"The material and spiritual development of mankind is not possible without creating a spirit of universal peace and tolerance. To create this atmosphere, the land of Sind has an exemplary message: the truly generous respect for mankind. Our venerable ancestors and great saints regarded it as real worship and, for centuries, our people have given a living proof of the truth and success of this message."

It is a fact that the Valley of Sind has always held a distinguished place as a tolerant bastion of conflicting faiths and cultures. I dwelt at length about this trait and its effect in my address as President of the Reception Committee of All India Muslim League Session held at Karachi in 1943. Here are quoted some of its passages:

"Friends! Glorious has been the past of this land. I hope its future will also be the same. Due to a variety of reasons, the history of this region has been glamorous. This land is the birth-place of umpteenth ancient civilizations. The monuments of Mohen-jo-daro are a witness to this fact. Several ancient races were inter-mingled here. The relics of Dravidiens, Aryans, Samiites and Mongols are easily to be found here."

"Like the mingling of different races, the amalgam of different religions and philosophies took place here, which is not to be found elsewhere. Buddhism was born in India, but it flourished here. When Islam appeared in Sind, Bud-

dhism was still prevalent. The people of this place had not yet forgotten Gautam's teachings of Nirvana. Islam added a positive element to the teachings of Buddha."

"The philosophies of Vedant and the Unity of God (Wahdat-ul-Wujud) first influenced each other on this land. The principle of Unity influenced the thinking of the Hindus, weaning their interest in idolatory. Similarly, being influenced by the spiritual and common popularity of 'Bhajan' and 'Kirtan', the Muslim dervishes made music a part of their order. Thus, the Hindus and the Muslims came nearer to each other with tolerance. The teachings of Bhagat Kabir and Guru Nanak are a glaring proof of the same tolerance. Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit has a distinguished place in the teachings of the unity of human brotherhood and religions. It is due to this effective teaching that the inhabitants of the Valley of Sind, professing different religions and beliefs, are living together with love and amity. Religious or sectarian prejudices, caste differences and the feelings of violence are as much absent in this land as perhaps nowhere else."

I spoke of the greatness of this land to my distinguished guests not to refresh their memory: my object was to propose some ways for making the future of this land bright.

Gentlemen! It is not unknown to you that the collective life of humanity, passing through various stages of evolution, is advancing towards its final goal, and this goal is the unity of thought and action. My firm conviction is that religious, ethical and philosophical ideas, politico-economic forces and movements, have served as various ways for reaching the important object. Every page of history is a record of this evolutionary struggle. Through these ways, the scattered and small families developed into clans and a combination of various clans in their turn made nations.

In different periods, the human groups have had different modes of unity among themselves. As a fundamental and common value, unity of language, culture, belief and other

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interests have played an important part.

The ideas in the modern age which are disseminating as a fashion, have led to conflict instead of promoting peace. Instead of laying stress upon the foundations of unity, they give importance to secondary things. Beyond doubt, these relative values have been the means of unity among large groups in the past; but at last, history rejected them as counterfeit coins.

Unless some solid solution is found for doing away with the political, economic and religious prejudices, there can neither be lasting peace nor unity in the world. To reach the solution, it is necessary to make use of mental training and ability which is cultivated in a particular environment and with a specific historical tradition. The people of Sind are most suited to it, because they have set a living example of tolerance and fellow-feeling. Therefore, their fellow-feeling deserves to be followed.

This is not only in the present day world that the people of this place, despite their religious, sectarian and political differences, have a sincere and whole-hearted respect for humanity. This is the century-old custom of this land. Pages of history bear testimony to the fact that all the races and cultures which made their entry in this land, got integrated. All the beliefs and ideas which had converged here, lost their prejudices and finally they blended into love and amity.

I believe that, like the past and the present, this august land will not only retain its quality of love in future too, it will further develop it. Turbulent is, no doubt, the present age, but I am not the least despondent. I have a robust hope that, in the endeavour for the reconstruction of a new world, the struggle between the East and the West will have to be directed to a more positive channel so as to forge unity. The land of Sind has to deliver a special message of love and it has to play a particular role.

I expressed these ideas twenty-six years ago. Ever since that time, my faith in Sind's message of love has become more firm. What are the ideological motives of this message? How have our saints made us grasp them? I spent the greater part of my life by answering these questions. Therefore, this book contains all that which is the essence of my long pursuit, thought, research and experience.

My findings may be regarded as "personal conclusions" of a truth-seeker. People have a right to agree or disagree with me, as they have their own knowledge and experience. I do not claim for the monopoly of truth. To err is human; and I am a human being. But whatever I have written in this book, each and every word of it is written with utmost honesty. The ocean of truth is a collection of unlimited drops. The vast orchard of thought has borrowed its beauty from multi-coloured flowers. This effort of mine may perhaps be reckoned as of that type.

I have a feeling that orthodox men will not like my ideas. It is possible that such men may consider me either a renegade or a communist. Similarly, perhaps those young men may not be able to digest my ideas, those who were exploited and duped in the name of conventional belief and religion. Thus, they are disgusted with religion and are now inclined towards materialism. There is every likelihood that some may call me conservative and a 'sufi mulla'. In this connection, I deem it necessary to state that, by getting this book published, I do not mean to woo people to my ideology, nor do I intend to irritate any one. My sole objective has been to call a spade a spade and to state the fact in its barest form as I happened to observe it. Therefore, the title of the book is suggestive. To quote a line of a poet:

من اے ہوئے یکنم کے بشنود یا شنود

"I raise a cry, anyone may hear it or not."

I hope that the believers in the verse of Quran which teaches "For me my faith, and for you yours" and the progressive men reposing their faith in the freedom of thought, will receive my thoughts with an open mind.

I understand that all religions, philosophies, ideas and branches of learning are the segments of that Omniscient Being called God. If a person gets a drop out of this Unbounded Sea, he can justifiably be proud of his good fortune. But if one drinks it to the full, even then he cannot claim perfection. The sea of All-Knowledge is far away from the possession or inheritance of a human being. None can claim for such a thing. Revealing this fact, Hafiz says:

در هر طرف که رستم جز حیرتم نمیفزود
فریاد زیں بیاباں دیر راوبے نہایت

*Whichever way I went, I became more wonder-struck.
I am worried by this desert and this endless way.*

Wisdom is acquired through continuous contemplation, knowledge, experience, sublimation of self and action. According to my ability, I too have endeavoured to garner some pearls. Jewellers may reckon them as precious ones or mere shells. However, without much apprehension of the censure of critics, I am presenting to the readers of this book the results of my mental exercise in their original form.

According to the theory of evolution, each age has brought new revelations. In future too, this process is likely to continue. Hence, to regard any religious or worldly law as final or any faith or doctrine as lasting, is against the fundamental principle of the laws of evolution. I see the glare of truth in every religion. I consider all religious beliefs as part of Nature. The fundamental aim of all religions

is to promote peace, progress and prosperity of mankind.

In my view, a Sufi should not necessarily be a follower of any particular theology. He can make use of every religion, philosophy, learning and experience. But a Sufi is essentially non-committed. His love transcends every law and limit. He believes in:

ہر ملک ملک ماست کہ ملک خداست ماست

"Every country is mine, since it is the country of God."

To me, Sufi'ism is like a lovely bouquet radiating love and truth: a bouquet in which flowers of various colour and smell are beautifully assorted. The Sufi culls from all religious beliefs, philosophies and branches of learning the fundamental unity and truth. He cannot imprison himself in a narrow cell. He sincerely follows the saying of the Prophet:

"Accept the good wherever you get it from and reject the bad."

The Sufi perceives a purpose and a plan in the creation of the universe. He considers knowledge and vision to be the essence of all religions. He deems all that unnatural which leads to hatred, enmity, disturbances, violence, chaos and confusion. To raise the voice of truth against all such things, is the very aim of a Sufi. As an ordinary pursuer of the path of Sufi'ism, I am presenting this book with this noble objective. If it impresses the readers, I shall feel honoured beyond measure.

GHULAM MURTAZA SYED

Chapter 1

RELIGION: Their Historical Background

A treasure of knowledge about the world and the universe has been acquired from various branches of learning. This knowledge is primarily gained through researches. In these researches are included the evolutionary stages of human life and also the history of religion. The branches of learning which have unravelled the truth are:

1. Geology
2. Geography
3. Anthropology
4. Ethnology
5. Philology
6. Archaeology
7. Sociology
8. Folklore
9. Mythology
10. Philosophy, and
11. History etc

Gone are the days when the truth about religion could

be known through the revealed books, commentaries and traditions. In modern times, knowledge of religion has become a science. The researches of those learned men who spent their lives, studying the above-named branches of learning and researching on different religions, cannot be brushed aside. The research on religion may be divided into two kinds:

1. Research in the special departments of particular religions.
2. Research on the history of all religions, causes of their origin, their constituent elements, their aims and objects.

In the first category of researchers, there are commentators, traditionalists, jurists, priests and bishops i.e. the learned men related to religions and sects. Among the researchers of the second type are pantheistic sufis, historians, philosophers and scientists.

If the results of the researchers of the men of both types are scrutinised, it would be clear that the first kind, inspite of its specialization in some spheres, is confined to a limited field, while that of the second kind transcends the limitless universe. It was really through the contribution of works of the second kind of learned men and thinkers that a complete history of almost all religions was written in the light of the researches of the above-named sciences. Similarly, these men of learning thoroughly discussed the causes of the origin of religion, its basic purpose and its constituent elements. Thus, the basic unity behind diversity was discovered and presented before the world.

Since I am not writing a thesis on the history of religions, therefore a comprehensive discussion of the matter is out of place. My purpose is to present briefly those truths which have struck my mind regarding the origin of religion and the history of its development, so that whatever I say in the following pages, may become clear.

According to the researches of the scientists, signs of life have been existing on the surface of earth for millions of years. The primary life consisted of 'amoeba', after which there came fish, creeping lizards, birds, quadrupeds. Life, evolving through these stages, chiselled into human shape at last. This is the height of the evolution of material body. Man rightly deserves to be called the best of the creation. Like the body, the intelligence had also to pass through evolutionary stages. Finally, from inorganic and organic matter, it, at last, came to inhabit in man.

How long has man existed on earth? Scientists, trying to find out an answer to this question, have come to the conclusion that man has existed on earth for millions of years. They have also given a clear evidence of the fact that primitive man lived in forests and on hills in the form of a brute. The early man had no idea of cultivation, rearing of cattle, use of fire or even of covering his body. He used to wander about naked. His food was tree leaves, wild fruits, raw meat and fish. He had no permanent dwelling place. In order to protect himself from scorching heat or freezing cold, he took shelter in caves or hollows of trees.

When did he get the power of speech? What was the nature of his first conversation? What were his moral values? What were the limits of his consciousness? These, and many such questions, have been researched on. As a result of these researches, many interesting and wonderful facts have been revealed. Researches are continuing. It is hoped that more useful information, with a clearer proof, will be gained in future.

Now think of religion. Is any of the existing religions older than four or five thousand years? Has any religion conveyed any information about the origin of life and man? Has it revealed any truth about the earth and the universe? Has it thrown any light on the physical features of the earth and its inhabitants? If so, are all these facts

or most of them proved true in the light of modern researches? Modern science tells us that the primitive man had to face very many hazards at every step of his life. He found himself completely helpless in the face of hazards and got frightened even at the thought of them. The fear of some objects had permanently settled in his mind. For example: sudden changes in Nature such as extreme cold or heat, heavy rains, floods, storms, earthquakes, eruptions of volcanoes etc.

Fear of Beasts and Hidden Forces

During each day of his existence, primitive man came across such animals in forests and rivers as the horse, the elephant, the rhinoceros, the bear, the dragon and the crocodile. Besides, for his failures and troubles, he regarded some hidden and mysterious powers as responsible. To such powers, he named as genii, giants, spirits and devils. The primitive man also devised ways and means in order to ward off the baneful effects of these powers.

Casual accidents such as epidemics, attacks of more powerful groups, famines, sudden deaths, physical disability, disputes about possessing women and problems concerning the means of subsistence pestered him. The primitive man considered himself insecure from all such happenings. Fear, despair and superstition always overwhelmed his mind. At last, his mind set about to get rid of them. He had two important problems: safety of life and satisfaction of mind and soul.

For achieving the first objective, he came to some good conclusions after thousands of years. For example, he began to tame animals for getting milk and meat. It, on the one hand, brought economic relief to him; on the other hand, he saved himself from the troubles and dangers of the hunt. He got accustomed to store the grain of some plants

naturally grown. During famine or the period of food crisis, he began to consume stored-up grain. He learnt the skill of making arms from wood and stone. Thus, hunting of the wild beasts became easier for him. The primitive man also learnt to preserve fire which was produced by volcanoes and by rubbing together the wood of the forest trees. He used it in cooking grain and meat, for saving himself from the rigour of cold and for providing light.

All these things made the life of the primitive man easier. The grip of fear and anxiety on his mind somewhat slackened. It also instilled in him courage to take steps towards social revolution. This courage became the starting point, apart from furnishing the fundamental material, for the development of humanity.

For his other important objective i.e. satisfaction of mind and soul, the primitive man achieved greater success than before. Observations, experiments, thinking and contemplation of thousands of years had engendered in his mind some beliefs and superstitions. The important ones of these are: 'every living being in this world has a soul. This essence exists even after the end of material life.' This observation created in his mind a vague idea of life after death. He began to consider useful and harmful things as powerful spirits. Thus, he started worshipping some of the trees, mountains, heavenly bodies and elements etc.

The primitive man could not see most of the powerful spirits as visible beings, nor was he capable of forming any clear concept of them. But, because of certain manifestations, he had come to believe in them. He regarded those spirits as the cause of heavenly disasters, casual happenings as a potential reason for his own troubles.

During this first stage of material and mental development, man was savage. The qualities of love, mercy and forgiveness were still far from him. The practices of sav-

age life had convinced him that the invisible spirits which he called gods, goddesses, genii and devils, were fierce, violent and dangerous. Those spirits could be propitiated only by flattery, humble devotion, offerings, sacrifices, incantations, rituals, vigils and magic. This way of thinking led to the invention of worships and prayers etc.

At some places, there was worship of the moon and the stars; at other, rivers, hills, seas, clouds, trees and fire etc., were taken as gods. To seek mercy from them, a series of worship were started. This continued and man began to consider the spirits of dead animals, relatives and enemies as partakers in their affairs. In order to turn the good and evil influences of these objects for his own benefits, the primitive man introduced various kinds of prayers, practices, recitation and rituals. In addition to it, his thinking on the material causes of the creation led him to worship human limbs. The god of sex, Kam Deva, and Cupid's Phallus reflect the extreme degree of sex worship.

During the same period of the creation and worship of gods, some animals were considered as good or bad. The animals which proved useful, helpful and beneficial for a clan were regarded as good. As they were considered friendly, therefore they were treated with respect too. Later on, those animals were regarded as manifestations of invisible powers and were worshipped as gods. Similarly, the animals which proved harmful, troublesome and unprofitable were regarded as evil. They were regarded as manifestations and friends of evil spirits. Consequently, they were hated and shunned. In the books of anthropology, the good animals are called 'totems' and the evil ones as 'taboos'. The cow, the monkey, the dog and the hog are totems and taboos.

The interesting fact is that every human clan selected its own totems and taboos. The result was that some animals, being regarded as good and evil in one clan, were not

considered so in other clans. Further, the totems of one clan were the taboos of another. The reason is obvious. Every human group had different circumstances and experiences, and therefore it formed different opinions about the animals. When animal love or animal worship developed, it developed to such an extent that, in order to assert their superiority, very many clans started tracing their origins from favourite animals. For example: the Red Indians of California called themselves the descendants of wolves. Some well-known Turkish and Mongol tribes of Tartary claimed that their ancient mother whom they had descended from, was a blue-eyed she-wolf. Some tribes of the aborigines in America regarded the birds, the quadrupeds and fish as their ancestors. To this day, they are called by those names. Vatica, the famous clan of Africa, claims its descent from a boar. Some ancient inhabitants of Malaya regarded themselves as hailing from the race of Semin or apes. The inhabitants of New Guinea claim that they are sons of a fish and of a white parrot. The famous Bani Asad tribe of Hejaz and the Kaher clan of Sind name themselves after the lion.

In the past, this was the practice of relating one's blood with animals. Nowadays, it is not of much value. Nevertheless, the practice of naming men after favourite animals, is still common. Besides, many civilized nations today use their totemic animals with great honour as their national sign. For example, the bear of Russia, the dragon of China, the eagle of Germany and America, the double-mouthed lion of Britain, are the testimony of the fact.

The notion of regarding the animals as good and evil subsequently led to the belief in lucky and unlucky stars and planets. This flight of imagination continued. At last, it created two great powers: 'Good' and 'Bad', 'Right' and 'Wrong', 'Truth' and 'Falsehood'. The conflicting powers of 'God' and 'Satan', 'Ahriman' and 'Yazdan', are

the results of such division of actions or of attributes. Thus, it was the sum-total of human consciousness or an outcome of mental restlessness, where, after thousands of years of the evolution of his body, man secured this place through his continuous struggle for the satisfaction of spirit and mind.

Why did the consciousness of man impel him to go farther? Why did he feel restless? Why did his mind and soul crave for satisfaction? Has this craving any relative value? Has human conscience reached its ultimate goal? If not, will it ever be able to reach its ultimate end? These are some important questions. Of these, the easiest and most intelligible is the question: the craving of mind and soul for satisfaction. Even today, man appears to be as restless as he was in the past. He is yet struggling for achieving satisfaction. The greater is the effort, the farther the goal recedes.

Both the bright and the dark sides are before me. I do not deny that much of the darkness has disappeared. But, at the same time, a new dawn is yet awaited. The fact is that the light of all the rising suns has remained confined to a particular sphere. No doubt, their rays kindled some nooks and corners, but instead of removing darkness, they set the houses and towns on fire. There is no denying the fact that some light does appear when the houses are burnt. But if it was the proper way of dispelling darkness, then despite many houses and habitations ablaze, why is there corrosive darkness everywhere? Why is the ghost of prejudice, hatred and violence looming large everywhere? Why is there competition in the use of horrible weapons?

Beyond doubt, it is not darkness alone which has its lengthening shadow all over the world. A single precept or a belief too produces a flash of light and it dispels darkness. To add more lustre to light, is the real task of the men of consciousness. Verily, all hopes for good can be

pinned up with it. But what is the belief? In answer to this question, you will hear chequered utterances. Many tall talks will be made. Dozens of leaders of new and old beliefs will try to drag you towards them. This condition is seemingly very confusing. The result is that doubts envelope the mind: what to accept and what to reject. Even then, the right choice is not so difficult. The touchstone is that whenever you find that the exponents of an ideology or a belief begin to preach hatred and use incitement in alluring words against the opposite ideologies or beliefs, insisting on narrow-mindedness and prejudices, expressing the spiritual power of their belief as indispensable not only for their own countrymen but for the people of the whole world, they are counterfeit coins. Such a faith can never be regarded as a spiritual message. A genuine message, which can satisfy the urges of a human being, is that which is free from prejudices of race, colour and religion. It primarily teaches the lesson of love. It draws its sustenance from the concept of brotherhood. A true gospel is that which looks at man and his affairs and problems entirely from humanitarian point of view. This true message cannot be anything but love and tolerance. For conveying this august message, there is no need of power, nor of influence, nor of violence. Prejudice and base feelings are contrasting to it. In any form, if the contrasting means get allied to it, its sweetness will change into the bitterness of venom. The sweet-seeker will not touch it. And if there is a gullible person to taste it, he will not get anything but bitterness.

People like me, the lovers of humanity, who believe in love, toleration and fellow-feeling, are not without hope that humanism will ultimately prevail. The eternally restless spirit of man will find its cherished goal. Thus, human soul will get contented. This faith or belief or hope is not based only on a pious wish, but on solid realities. The solid reality is that desire for the propagation of the message of love, is

not a comparative value for humanity, but it is a necessity. Even in the past, the mind and soul of man had been restless to achieve it. Man is still restless and shall remain so unless he has attained peace. The obstacles in his way are savage sentiments. These obstacles can be overcome by the progress of civilization and culture. The first condition is the spirit of toleration or the respect of man as a whole. We can fulfil this condition by controlling our brute passions.

Now there remain these questions: Why did man crave for advancement? Why did he feel restless? Why did his soul and mind feel an urge for gaining satisfaction? There is only one right and plausible answer to these questions: "Experience of life." Different stages in human consciousness and thought are in fact the result of good and bad experiences. They are the result of action and reaction of brute instincts. The entire history of human thought and life is in fact the history of struggle between the savage and civilized instincts of man.

The following instincts are of fundamental importance in this connection:

1. Instinct of Acquisition.
2. Instinct of Race-preservation.
3. Instinct of Self-preservation.
4. Instinct of Repulsion.
5. Instinct of Elation or Self-display.
6. Instinct of Pugnacity or Self-assertion.

The following is a brief description of the role each instinct has played in the life of an individual:

Instinct of Acquisition

Under the impulse of this instinct, man tried to satisfy the needs of his daily life. It also impelled him to seek pleasure. As a result of that, there arose a conflict between the individual and the group. This conflict gave birth to

numerous problems in the corporate life of the individual and the group. Constant tension and confusion led to jeopardise peace. At last, after the century-old bitter experience, different tribes collectively evolved certain social principles and norms in order to overcome the troubles. In this way, social principles gradually came into existence. Because of their usefulness, those principles gradually came into existence and acquired a sacred status.

Instinct of Race-Preservation

In the beginning, under the impress of this instinct, man used to satisfy his sexual desires without feeling ashamed and had no distinction. After millions of years, his mind conceived the idea of keeping society clean, thereby avoiding mutual disputes and maintaining the purity of race. Hence, on the basis of certain superstitious beliefs, arguments and personal feelings, he laid down some principles. Later on, these principles served as a solid foundation for the ethical and religious code to be adopted by the tribes and nations. How did these laws grow in different tribes and societies? How did they gain religious and moral sanction? On these questions, the learned men of the present age have worked, thus providing valuable information through their researches. The sciences of sexology, sociology etc. are the products of the working of the instinct.

Instinct of Self-Preservation

From the beginning to this day, man has primarily been governed by an urge to preserve his self and things related to it. The inherent dangers challenging the safety of life goaded man to seek refuge in superstition. He started believing in genii, devils and gods. At the same time, he began worshipping the sun, the moon, the stars, the rivers, the mount-

ains and the animals. Similarly, he made sacrifices to propitiate the invisible forces, adopting ways of magical incantations and other modes of worship. But we see that, in spite of his worship, he had not been able to free himself from fear with regard to his life and property. Worships, penances, offerings, contemplation and concentration failed to provide him strength. On the other hand, doubt and dissension, the feeling of hatred and enmity kept on being nurtured by individuals, tribes and nations. Even today, there exists the rivalry between the super powers and therefore the demon of a monstrous war keeps on threatening. Poisonous gases, nepon bombs, atom bombs and hydrogen bombs are being manufactured with lunatic competition. Distance-covering rockets and continental missiles are being prepared on a large scale. Super-Power rivalries and groupings are gripping nations and countries. Nothing can be said as to which event may suddenly ignite the sparks of the Third World War.

No doubt, to counter this state of uncertainty and to promote peace, the movements of non-violence and co-existence were also initiated. But, so far, the malady has had no remedy. Prejudice, selfishness and mutual distrust have produced no desired result. Unfortunately, in the absence of a congenial atmosphere, these movements could not gain ground.

This atmosphere which is charged with fear and hatred, does not merely exist on the international plane. In almost all the countries of the world, a horrible conflict is going on. People of one nation or race, followers of one religion or sect, are fighting one another. The powerful men are bent upon exploiting and usurping the rights of the weak. In this game of barbarism and loot, preservation of life and property, dignity and honour, appears to be all futile.

Instinct of Repulsion

This instinct is based on the feelings of loss, pain, jealousy, rivalry and that of inferiority complex. If you look into the causes of hatred, vitiating the individuals, the tribes and the nations, you will discover one of these things. There is no greater danger to the safety and well-being of humanity and culture than hatred. That is why prophets, saints, reformers and god-incarnates preached mutual tolerance, love and amity. They founded religions, propounded new philosophies and social values on solid foundations so as to promote peace, binding human beings with the bondage of love and brotherhood.

Fellow feeling and respect for humanity are the outcome of such efforts. These efforts brought into existence our cities and nations where men of different beliefs, sects, colours and races dwell. It is something different that narrow-minded and bigoted men keep on fanning the flame of hatred and continue to ignite the fire of dissension and disturbance. The most furious fire is the fire of religious and sectarian hatred. It is easy to inflame. Its flames stay longer and the range of its destruction is considerably wider. What an irony that the founders of religion used it as a means for promoting human brotherhood and for fostering love and friendship. But the followers, contrary to its spirit, indulge in sowing the seeds of discord and hatred.

Instinct of Elation and Self-Display

There is a proverb that Nature has deprived none of beauty and intellect. Hence, we see that no man considers himself inferior to others. Every one deems himself a paragon of beauty and intelligence. To a certain extent, this self-confidence is necessary and good. But when this feeling

degenerates into self-deception, man becomes vain and, in order to assert his authority on others, he takes recourse to power and violence. The ego of individuals sometimes destroys the values of society. An inflated ego therefore becomes a great obstacle in the way of peace and progress. To control the vice of egotism in man, certain religions have prescribed the remedy in the form of self-control and ascetism but these too have failed to deliver any good.

Instinct of Pugnacity or Self-Assertion

Some animals are carnivorous and some herbivorous. Man is a combination of the two. In him, the gregarious habit is developed because of vegetarianism. But he gets incited too at the slightest provocation. It is due to his being carnivorous. The instinct of pugnacity goads him to be violent. Therefore, he fights and sheds blood. To these acts of violence, he calls feats of heroism and bravery. The powerful oppressing the weak, the fighting tribes dominating the less fighting ones, the conquest of a foreign land on the basis of military superiority, the rich exploiting the poor, are the results of the kindred instinct.

Because of its unhealthy effects and inducement to emotionalism, some religions have called the use of meat as savagery. They have found it detrimental to the society. Hence, they advocated for vegetarianism and non-violence. Other religions regarded pugnacity as a natural instinct and therefore they recommended to make the best use of it. However, man has not so far been able to get rid of the baneful effect of the excess of emotion.

From the study of the influence of instincts on the evolution of human intellect and beliefs, it becomes explicitly clear how religions and superstitions have originated and how religion, through its different revolutionary stages, has acquired its present position. If all these stages are criti-

cally analysed, the following results are obtained:

1. Religious beliefs were the product of fear and doubt which impelled the primitive man to superstitions.
2. To dispel doubts, magical charms, incantations, and sacrifices were the methods which were employed in the beginning, the purpose of which was either to vanquish or flatter vague hidden powers.
3. All the existing religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Jainism, Zoroasterainism, Chinese Taoism, have in some form or other the elements of primitive beliefs and rituals. For example: faith in the earthly spirits, heavenly bodies, material objects, living creatures; the control of hidden forces; making of sacrifices and offerings to propitiate them; trust in the spell of some words; burning of incense etc; wearing of threads and charms; conception regarding lucky and unlucky numbers. All these are the heritage of ancient beliefs of primitive days.
4. Modern organised religions are the discovery of five thousand years at the most.
5. Very like religions, if the modern social laws are investigated, it is to be discovered that the origins of most of them can be traced from the ancient tribal customs and rituals.
6. The same is true of modern moral laws. On research, many a prevalent moral precept will appear to have its association with the old tribal values.
7. Religions had their origin in the worship of many gods. Then followed Dualism, (Ahriman and Harmazud), then Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Ghost) and finally the Unity where a single God came to be worshipped. But these are various stages in the evolution of religion.
8. In the early religions, gods were regarded as rageful and cruel. The concept of a compassionate and benevolent God was a latter product.

Religion and Reality

9. Religious beliefs, faith in superstitions, rituals and prayers have lost much of their sanctity after the scientific inventions and the rise of intellectualism.
10. According to the theory of evolution which the Quran has called as a natural religion, all religions have been evolving one after another or one along with the other. Besides, their practices have been changing according to the demands of time.
11. The originators of the modern organised religions and their commentators have also made changes in the ancient beliefs, practices, prayers and ceremonies in accordance with the exigencies of times and the dictates of social conditions. Some old things were retained and new ones were added so as to suit the changed situation. In this way, the world religions came into existence, and much room was left for further changes (Ijtihad) in them.
12. The claim made by the originators of religions that they were gifted with supernatural wisdom and knowledge and had the power of revelations, was for impressing the importance of their good messages on the people.

Comprehension of these fundamental points makes it abundantly clear that just as families form tribes and tribes form nations or as small villages constitute a district, a division, a province, and a country; so have the ancient beliefs, customs, modes of prayers of different tribes, with some changes here and there, shaped out universal religions.

A broader view also makes it manifest that the basic feelings at work in the origin of religion are fear and hope which have given birth to beliefs about pleasure and pain, reward and punishment, good and evil, life and death, worship and prayer etc. This is the reason that just as various learned men have propounded different theories about knowledge and science, various prophets, god-incarnates and reformers have expressed their ideas about the origin

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of the universe, the existence of spirits, life after death, reward and punishment, life and its purpose.

This is absolutely clear that the way the founders of religions have brought about changes in the social and moral laws according to the increasing demands of society, so have they amended or rejected the previous precepts in order to create a harmony with the intellectual urges of their times. Not only that each religion inherited the legacy of another, but it ushered a progressive reform for its age. Thus, in this form, every religion widened the circle of human brotherhood, removed the obstacles in the development of society, and became the *raison d'être* for the promotion of peace and prosperity.

So long as a religion kept on performing its real role, its leaders and followers continued to retain the warmth of generosity not for themselves, but for others too. They did not feel offended if question of 'what' and 'why' were posed to them. Similarly, free enquiry and differences were not regarded as an affront. To win others to their side, only practical examples and cogent arguments were used. But when religion became a mere convention and it no longer remained a dynamic force, its custodians and commentators stagnated and they became archaic. Traditional concepts as well as old moral and social ways of life were regarded as eternal. Eyes were closed to the progressive demands of societies and the use of reason was forbidden.

The cumulative result was that the followers of religion were confined to within the limits of narrow-mindedness and bigotry. So much was their alienation that they became a group striving for economic benefits. Again, just as powerful nations dominated the weak ones, so larger religious communities devoured smaller ones. Thus, they assumed the shape of religious imperialism.

These two kinds of imperialism are different only in one respect. Just as international imperialism exploits

Religion and Reality

the weak nations on the plea of its superiority of power and pelf, so does religious imperialism dominate a weaker sect or a minority community on the concept of the 'best reward' in the world Hereafter.

We see today that groups of professional commentators exist in almost every major religion. These people, for the safeguard of their vested interests, consider it necessary to claim that the solution of all the problems of humanity is possible only and only through their religion. Other religions are not only devoid of this solution, but their followers are dirty, infidels, anti-Christ and are bound to go to hell. They pose as if the monopoly of 'truth' rests with them and the allotment of paradise and hell is their sole right.

Such thoughts may be of any importance to a particular group, but for the purpose of the unity of mankind, universal peace, social progress, these ideas are opposed to the real spirit and high ideals of religion. They lay the foundation of bigotry, hatred, dissension, conflict and prove to be highly detrimental to the progress and prosperity of human race. If mean-heartedness and narrow-mindedness are not yet cast aside, we are very likely to face such a grave disaster which has had no precedent in either past or present.

Chapter 2

THE CONSTITUENTS OF RELIGIONS

The facts limelighted in the last chapter may be summarised as:

- a) In his primitive stage, man became a victim of various kinds of fear and superstition. Therefore, for his security and satisfaction, he contrived certain ideas and magical charms according to his comprehension and means. Later on, these things were responsible for the birth of magic and incantation.
- b) Experience led to change and progress of man in his knowledge, consciousness and conditions of life. Gradually there came to exist a belief in spirits and hidden powers.
- c) To ward off anger of the hidden forces or to seek their mercy, the primitive man initiated sacrifices, worships, prayers and ceremonies.
- d) The idea of good and evil, lucky and unlucky was associated with some particular thing or animal.

As the unbridled instincts hindered the growth of social life, therefore some social and moral laws were framed in order to castigate their baneful effects. At last, these factors helped in originating the organized religion. This analysis

makes it explicitly clear that, in the beginning, the causes of origin and objectives of religion were similar to that of the magic. It was the fear of the elements of Nature coupled with the safety and well-being of human race. This perhaps is the reason that there is not much difference between the means and the acts which the two adopted for the fulfilment of their objectives.

Take, for example, the sacrifice of man or animals, sprinkling of blood, burning incense, believing in the efficacy of the repetition of certain words, sitting within a circle and controlling genii and evil spirits by means of long incantations and repetition of words, considering diseases as a result of wrath of the hidden powers, ill-treating a patient and curing his disease through magic and offering food to spirits. All these methods are common to both primitive religions and magic. On the methods of magical incantation, the book of Sir John Fraser is indeed a work of standard and elaborate research. After going through it, there remains no doubt about the fact that in the belief and practice of magic and religion, many things are common.

Which of these two came first, is a question on which the learned men have differed. The majority believe that magic is older than religion. But there is a consensus of opinion that, in magic, man discovered the tendency of reliance on his courage, prowess and ability to confront with the elements of Nature and the hidden forces. Religion, on the other hand, created in him the feeling of helplessness and weakness.

This basic difference in magic and religion afterwards put the two on different paths. Magic, progressing and pursuing its own path, reached the stage of reason and science. Religion progressed, but to the extent of heavenly spirits, Day of Judgement and life after death. It passed through worship of multiple gods and finally reached the Oneness of God. But in spite of this contrast, the object-

ives of the two were the service, progress and prosperity of mankind.

Now let us try to find out the constituents of universal religions. After pondering over the realities and after thrashing the recorded facts, I have discerned the following aspects:

- i Belief and knowledge about universe and spirits which we may call as Divinity.
- ii Principles related to morality and self-control which we may term as Ethics.
- iii Religious ceremonies, obligations and prayers.
- iv Social laws which are called Theology or Jurisprudence.

Since knowledge of Divinity is the first and fundamental branch of religion, I therefore wish to discuss it in a comparative way.

THE DIVINITY

This aspect of religion throws light on the following facts:

- A. Existence of the universe and knowledge of its various parts.
- B. Belief in the existence of spirits and continuation of life.
- C. Explanation of the plan and purpose of creation.

A. EXISTENCE OF THE UNIVERSE AND KNOWLEDGE OF ITS VARIOUS PARTS

I shall divide this subject into three parts. One, the genesis and organisation of empyrean; secondly, the genesis and evolution of earth and living beings; and thirdly, the birth and evolution of man.

Genesis and Organisation of Empyrean

As far I know, all the religions of the world have either kept quiet about it or they have accepted incorrect views

of the physicists of their times. The theories of the physicists of ancient India, Middle East, Greece, Egypt and China which were accepted by religions, have been proved wrong by the recent researches and some of them have been modified and improved. Hence, to claim today that one's own founder of religion or scripture has given final and eternal information on this subject, is either sheer ignorance or effrontery.

In the world of today, if somebody says that the sun revolves round the earth, the earth is not round but flat and it has seven stages, the seven skies exist on each other like roofs and the stars are studded in the ceiling of the sky, people will undoubtedly laugh at him, even if he may cite a holy book or the sayings of the originator of a religion. The present-day Astronomy and Physics have completely gone out of the sphere of religious belief and have entered the domain of scientific research. On this issue, no religion can now guide the scientific information nor can challenge its views.

Birth and Evolution of Earth and Living Beings

Very like Astronomy, religions and their originators have failed to throw any light on this subject too. For the acquisition of knowledge on this subject, man is bound to be guided by science.

Birth and Evolution of Man

World religions have given two theories or beliefs about the birth of man. On the basis of harmony in these beliefs, we can put them into two groups. One group includes Judaism, Christianity and Islam and the other group comprises of Hinduism and Jainism.

According to the belief of the first group, God created the universe in six or seven days, moulded Adam out of clay in His own image and infused into him the soul. Adam was the prototype of man. According to the beliefs of the scholars of these religions, Adam came into existence seven hundred thousand years ago at the most. Thus, it can be inferred that, before Adam, there existed no human race on the globe. Modern scientific knowledge disproves in toto this theory or belief. Glaring proofs have been furnished that man has been inhabiting the earth for millions of years. The evidence given by science in this regard cannot be rejected but by an obstinate bigot. The religions of the other group accept the existence of human life for millions of years. This acceptance is in conformity with the scientific findings. But their belief about the birth and evolution of man does not go beyond mythological stories.

Only modern sciences give a clear idea which is based on experiments, researches and proofs. Although these theories cannot be regarded as final or complete, yet they are more dependable than the religious beliefs of the two groups.

Besides, as religions have ceased to produce any work or research in this regard while science is busy in its pursuit with full attention and determination. So we have no other choice but to depend on the guidance of science alone. The sciences of geography, archaeology, biology and psychology are serving us with a better guidance than religion.

B. BELIEF IN THE EXISTENCE OF SPIRITS AND CONTINUATION OF LIFE

For clear explanation, I divide this subject into two parts:

- (i) Existence of spirit;
- (ii) Continuation of life.

(i) Existence of Spirit

The concept about the spirit as something abstract and separate from the body is very ancient. In the primitive days, it originated from superstitions and beliefs. In the light of reason and experiment, modern scientific knowledge has proved that most of the ancient beliefs and theories are erroneous. But this is such a problem about which science has not yet given any logical solution. In this connection, the following verse of the Holy Quran appears to have purported the eternal truth. The Holy Prophet was told:

"People ask you about the soul, tell them that it is one of the secrets of God, and man can know little about it".

In the beginning, the spirit was considered to exist in innumerable things. But gradually, this concept was confined to the angels, devils, genii, evil spirits, human beings and other living creatures. Most of the religions now do believe in the spiritual nature and power of the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets, the mountains, the trees, the seas and the rivers, etc., although their own mythologies are replete with the tales of spiritual nature about these phenomena. It is possible that further success of the scientific researches may considerably decrease the present number of spirits.

However, faith in spirit is more ancient than the birth of modern religions. The present world religions have advanced certain theories about it. On the other hand, modern science has not so far been able to produce any solid proof to contradict the spirit. Hence, we find that, even today, most of the champions of modern science believe in the original and eternal existence of the spirits.

(ii) Belief in the Continuity of Life

About the belief prevalent regarding the genesis of spirit and continuity of life among the primitive men and in the old religions, researches are still going on in the light of modern sciences. It is probably that more may be discovered in near future. At present, there are four theories about it:

Theory of the Revealed Religions.

Theory of the Unrevealed Religions.

Vedantic and Pantheistic Theory.

Materialistic or Atheistic Theory.

Theory of Revealed Religions

By this theory, I mean Judaism, Christianity and Islam. These religions proclaim that the Almighty God created spirits on the Day of Creation. From there, each soul is sent one by one under the divine command. It stays in the world in an ordained body and for a prescribed period. After that, it goes to purgatory. On the Day of Judgement, all the spirits will re-enter their bodies, then they will be tried for their good and bad deeds, and will finally be either rewarded with Heaven or punished with Hell.

According to this belief, every spirit is created as singularly individual from the very beginning. It passes millions of years in the spirits' world; it comes for a short time in this world and then goes back.

Theory of the Unrevealed Religions

I put into this group Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. According to these religions, spirit is created as an entity, but they do not fix any time for it. They believe that both spirit and matter are eternal. For millions of years spirit

has been assuming the shapes of different bodies according to its actions. First it enters into stones, then into vegetables, further into animals and finally into human body. In this process of sublimation, if it performs good deeds, it is freed from the process of incarnation i.e. it achieves salvation. But if the deeds are not good, as a result of punishment, it is subjected to transmigration. What happens to the spirit after salvation, is not explained by these religions.

Vedantic and Pantheistic Theory

These two names appear to be different but they present an identical theory. Apparently, one is used for the Hindu thought and the other for the Muslim thought. But truly speaking, the theory ascribed to these names, is not the work of any of the parties. From the beginning to this day, conscientious men of every country and nation have been advocating this theory.

According to the theory of this group, spirit and matter did not separately exist in the beginning. The real existence was that of God. Spirit and matter are the attributes and manifestation of the Real and the Absolute. The idea about the separate existence of the spirits of men and animals was but a deception. Their existence is like the radiant beams of sun and like the drops of a deep ocean which is God. These beams and drops do not lose their individual existence. The origin and source of all is the Absolute. The Muslim mystics have explained the following verse of the Quran which says:

"All of us have come from God and to Him we go back".

Sachal Sarmast, a great saint and mystic poet of Sind, expresses this idea:

صورت جو سب جان پاں دش آيو پنهنجو تماشو

"There is no God but Allah. These different shapes are manifestations of His likeness for sport. All forms are His own. In every form, He observes His own novelty".

Mirza Ghalib has also expressed the same idea in his couplets:

دہر جز جلوہ یکتائی محبوب نہیں
ہم کہاں ہوتے اگر حسن نہ ہوتا خودیں

"Beauty, not the beholder, wished its own appreciation"
and

آپ آئینہ ہستی میں ہے خود اپنا حریف
ورنہ یاں کون ہے جو تیرے مقابل ہوتا

"None but He is His own rival in the limitless span called Universe".

One who has tasted the sweetness of this idea, gets free from narrow sectarian prejudices, ceremonial beliefs and lifeless prayers of the organised or unorganised religions. He regards love and welfare of humanity as his creed. At the same time, he is gifted with an insight to perceive all those who sow the seeds of discord among men in the name of Heaven and Hell. He speaks out spontaneously with unbounded faith:

دردِ دل کے واسطے پیدا کیا انسان کو
ورنہ طاعت کے لیے کچھ کم نہ تھے کڑبیاں

"It was for fellow-feeling that He created man. Innumerable were the angels for His obedience"

Bedil was very true when he said:

بحرِ عمیقِ دجِ جوئی پُوسی
دین و کفرِ داورِ قادوسی

"One who dives into the depths of the Ocean of reality, prejudices of faith and infidelity will be washed out from the chamber of his heart".

Materialistic or Atheistic Theory

In the light of both logical arguments and scientific experiments, the exponents of this theory have pondered over the Reality. They deny the separate existence of spirit on the basis of their way of deducing facts. They consider matter as the only reality. They regard life and death as the arrangement or disturbance of the inner harmony of the matter. According to Chakbast, a great poet:

زندگی کیا ہے؟ عناصر میں ظہورِ ترتیب
موت کیا ہے؟ انہی اجزا کا پریشاں ہونا

*"What is life? The arrangement of elements,
What is death? The disturbance of their components".*
Life springs when matter is systematically arranged.

It appears in the shape of an intelligent individual and gains individuality, and when the elements lose their balance, the individual dies. But, as experiments have proved, matter never perishes. It is eternal, and in its systematized arrangement, it gives birth to manifold shapes and lives.

This view of the materialists is analogous to that of the

Vedantics. Both contradict life-after-death and life Here-after. Both regard the world as eternal and un-ending. Both give importance to equality and welfare of man. The only difference is that the materialists deny the separate existence of spirit and the Vedantics take spirit and matter to be the two qualities of one Exalted Being.

C. EXPLANATION OF THE PLAN AND PURPOSE OF THE UNIVERSE

At present, there exist two concepts about the birth and the system of the universe. According to one, the universe has come into existence under a plan and its system is working in accordance with a law. According to the other concept, the genesis and system of the universe is based on accidents. The first idea is supported by the Philosophy of Idealism while the Philosophy of Materialism approves the second. All the world religions uphold the first concept. As a result of this idea, they believe in the existence of a Creator and a pattern and coherence in the universe and call him God.

Faith in God is the foundation or foremost condition of religions. But different religions have presented different concepts regarding the existence and attributes of God. The following three concepts are noteworthy:

- a) Concept of Personal God.
- b) Concept of Impersonal God.
- c) Concept of God beyond Imagination.

A general account of these three concepts will not be out of place here:

a) Concept of Personal God

In the beginning, when man lived as a beast, his immature

mind was not good at reasoning. Therefore, he conceived every powerful, useful or harmful thing to be god. Such things included heavenly bodies such as the sun, the moon, the stars, elements of Nature as air, fire, water and earth etc. Besides them, there were hidden powers of gods and goddesses. Also fierce animals, powerful men, magicians and religious leaders were included in this category. The evolution of this concept passed through four stages:

Period of Polytheism.

Period of Dualism.

Period of Trinitarianism.

Period of Unitarianism.

Period of Polytheism

This is the most ancient stage in the conception of God. But man took thousands of years even in reaching it, and he had to pass through different stages of thought and belief. According to my knowledge, for centuries in the beginning, man continued to regard the wild animals, strong men and magicians as gods. Afterwards, for a long time, he remained under the delusion of elemental forces and regarded them as gods. Then he thought about the heavenly bodies and started worshipping the sun, the moon and the stars for centuries. Gradually, the hidden forces and spirits influenced his thought. Therefore, he acknowledged every material object as a divine force. The king, the patriarch and the reformers were taken as gods or incarnates of gods. Very many miracles were attributed to them. The period of mythological stories began. During that period, every tribe and country had a separate god. When various tribes welded into a nation, an idol representing each tribe was placed in the common temples or places of worship. The gods of that period were considered as the embodiment of fury and wrath.

Period of Dualism

Later on, when man made more of progress, the idea of wrathful and malignant gods was modified into merciful and compassionate gods. In the beginning, this new idea did not reduce the number of gods. It divided the gods into two categories: the merciful gods and the malignant gods. Subsequently, this conceptual change led to the decline of the material gods. To the human imagination, invisible gods started attracting. Thus, there was the evolution of Dualism. The concept of God and Satan is the product of this idea.

Period of Trinitarianism

After Dualism, Trinitarianism is considered as a more developed form of the personal god. Before dualism, there prevailed the idea of wrathful gods. During the period of dualism, the idea of merciful gods gained currency. Although the concept of God and Satan had reduced the number of the pantheistic gods to two supreme but hidden forces, even then these forces were regarded as defying each other. There was no possibility of a compromise between them. The idea of Trinitarianism struck more appealing to the human mind because it had certain freshness and novelty in it. Thus, as a result of its unending restlessness, the human mind felt for the time being satisfaction in the idea of Trinity.

Brahama, Vishnu and Shiva of the Hindu mythology; Orisis, Isis and Horace of the Egyptian mythology; Father, Son and the Holy Ghost of the Christianity are the result of this belief.

Period of Unitarianism

After Trinitarianism, the concept of a single God captured the mind of man. This was the most developed image of personal god in which all the powers and qualities of the past gods were attributed to one great being. Allah, Ishwar, God and Jehovah are different names of this supreme power. It should be borne in mind that these four concepts about gods were, however, of personal or material nature. The idea of an impersonal god is a latter product. In the Torah, the Bible, the Quran and the Vedas, an image of God, similar to that of a man, is presented. Similarly, a specific place has been assigned as His abode. God has also been attributed to human qualities.

b) Concept of Impersonal God

By impersonal god is meant such a god who is absolutely non-material, purely spirit or essence and is exclusively abstract. At the very early stage of religion, this concept was confined to a few great men. Later on, when the preachers of the world religions got under the influence of rational knowledge, especially of the advanced countries, they too set forth the idea of an Impersonal God in the light of the Greek, the Egyptian, the Iraqi and the Iranian philosophies. Before presenting this concept, I consider it necessary to explain briefly the meaning of soul and body.

Body or Matter

According to the philosophy, whatever comes under the purview of five senses – touch, sight, taste, smell and hear-

ing which simultaneously comes within the range of time, space and cause, is called body or matter. The ancient thinkers believed body to be a compound of four elements. These elements were fire, water, air and dust. The scholars of the present day have accepted these basic elements as compounds. They have been able to discover seventy-two elements so far.

Soul or Spirit

According to the philosophical definition, whatever is not felt by the senses and transcends time, place and cause, is called spirit or soul. The materialists and most of the scientists do not believe in the separate existence or immortality of soul. But those who know reality – the Thinkers, Sufis and Saints rationally believe in it. On its very basis, they have faith in the Impersonal God.

As regards the concept of the Impersonal God, such believers regard Him as Timeless, Spaceless, Causeless, Formless, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient and Absolute. According to this idea, God is such a Supreme Power who has created everything in the whole of the universe. Further, He is the Provider, the Sustainer and the Nourisher of everything. He puts the soul into a body and then takes it out. But He neither possesses His own spirit and body nor does he beget and is begotten.

This idea of God is a developed form of Dualism and Trinity. The believers in Dualism and Trinity derive the truth of their beliefs from the logic of this developed idea of God. The concept of Wahdat-u-Shahood (myriad manifestations of God) in Islam also gains strength from it. But this concept makes room for further questions such as believer and infidel, truth and falsehood, sacred and profane. These questions serve as a potential substance for

religious learning called theology. The bigotry of belief in the oneness and plurality of God is the outcome of the same idea. The same bigotry leads to dissensions among the followers of religions. At the same time, it persuades people to archaism.

c) Concept of God Beyond Imagination

This idea presents God in such great and all-embracing term that He becomes beyond all comprehension. Intellect as a whole fails to perceive Him. Even the seer and the saint are astounded to observe His manifold luminations and myriad manifestations. The knower of truth albeit feels and finds Him everywhere, in every object and in each form. But he cannot define Him in a definite or precise way. Whatever be the approach of logic and science in this regard, of all the ideas pertaining to the evolution of God, this appears to be the most comprehensive and credible.

Great men of faith, believers in the monotheism and the pantheism, knowers of truth have been conforming to the same belief for ages. According to it, the reality is only one Truth. All other things are His attributes. He is the ultimate source of all Power, Knowledge and Beauty. After this belief, every form of distinction, hatred and petty prejudice becomes meaningless. As against plurality, the belief in the unity of God is the outcome of the same idea. This belief gives birth to the following views:

1. Body and Soul are Manifestation of the Same Personality

The great saint and poet of the valley of Sind, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, preaches the same idea in these words:

پڙاڏوسوسڏ، وروائيءَ ججي لهين،
هئا اڳهم گڏ، پر ٻڌڻ ۾ ٻه ٿيا

"Sound and echo are one. According to reality, there is no difference between them. The interesting point is that at first the two converge; but when they are heard, they appear to be two".

2. All Human Beings Belong to One Brotherhood

This means that every individual deserves the same or equal treatment, love and respect. None has a right to regard himself superior to others. It is inhuman to create hatred or work against the interests of a group of persons on the basis of colour, creed and caste. Shaikh Saadi says in this context:

بنی آدم اعضاء یکدیگرند، که در آفرینش زیک جوهر اند
چو یک عضو در آرد روزگار، در عضو را نماند ترار
تو کم محنت دیگران بے غنی، نشاید که نامت نهند آدمی

"All men are like different limbs of one body. It is because all are born of the same substance. If any part of the body pains, the whole body feels it. Similarly, you must have regard for the pain of every human being. If you have no such feeling, you are not worthy to be called a human being".

3. Unity is Latent in the Diversity of Religion

The real aim of all religions is service to humanity. So do the real followers of all religions wish. Thus, the outward differences or demarcations are but conventional.

One who meddles with them, he goes astray from the real objective. On the other hand, one who steadfastly holds this objective dear, he cares the least for such differences and demarcations. Bedil says aptly in his famous poetical work called Wahdat-Nama:

حقیقت مہک تیو، کفر ۽ ایمان،
مظہر مولا پاک جی، ہندو مسلمان،
تارا کیا تالان، سورج سندي سوجھري،

"However different be the traditional interpretations of faith and infidelity, their objective is one and the same. The Hindus and the Muslims are the manifestations of the same Holy Lord. As the stars disappear when the sun has risen, similarly knowledge of the Real Being castigates the value of apparent differences".

4. There Appears a Plan in the Creation and Organisation of the Universe

Scientific researches have proved that the organization of the Universe is based on some known principles and laws. The sun, the moon, the earth and all other planets are moving on fixed places and paths. There is a principle of harmony among them. Changes and accidents are also based on some principles. All these things give evidence of a great plan. The following verse of the Holy Quran lends strength to the same idea:

مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا

"This universe has not been made for nothing".

The truth-seeking saints and thinkers also saw a clear plan in the creation of the universe and called it the will of God, law of Nature and law of evolution. They regarded its origin as love or power of integration.

5. Man is the Manifestation of God

In support of this idea, the mystics have quoted the following verses of the Holy Quran:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

"There is no God but Allah – whatever exists is Allah; none but Allah has real existence".

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

"We are manifestations of God – He is our destination".

Shah Latif has explained this verse "And in their heart, they do not see" in this way:

موت تنهنجي هنج ۾ ، يچين ڪوھ پھي!
وفي انفسكم افلا تبصرون ، سوجھي ڪر سھي!
ڪڏھن ڪانھ وٺي ، ڪاھوت ڳولڻ ھٿ تي!

"The beloved is within you. Why do you wander in search of Him? Understand the words of God and take them to heart. The men of heart do not seek their beloved

(Allah) outside themselves”.

This view regards human dignity and respect as the purpose of God, promoting at the same time the unity, peace and progress of the entire human race. This view gives man solid self-confidence, demanding at the same time from him respect for humanity. How beautifully Chakbast has said:

عرش تک ہونیں سکتی جو رسائی نہ ہسی
ہی انسان کی ہے معراج کہ انساں ہو جائے

“It matters not if inaccessible is the empyrean; the highest ascent of man is to be a human being”.

OBSERVANCE

This aspect of religion is related to the following:

- a) Good Conduct.
- b) Self or Desires.
- c) Intelligence or Wisdom and Knowledge.

a) Good Conduct

In this part of observance, importance is given to sound human conduct. Not only in the modern religions, but in the primitive religions too when much of savagery and ignorance existed, good human conduct had more or less the same importance.

What is the Definition of Ethics or Morality?

Hundreds of books have been written on this subject

in the present age. A detailed discussion here is beyond the scope of this work. Albeit, in a few words, I can say that ethics means 'the law of good deeds'. Now the question arises as to how the criterion of these laws should be based. How far can the ancient laws be followed? We can find out correct answers to these questions only when we are able to know:

1. What are incentives to morality?
2. What are their basic principles?
3. Are moral laws universal or can they be modified according to the demands of time and circumstances?

Incentives to Morality

The scholars of ethics have divided these incentives into two parts. The basis of one part rests on high spiritual or emotional ideas; the other is based on mutual gain. The first part gave birth to religious morality and the second caused the modern national ethics.

Basic Principles of Morality

The experts agree that peace, progress and prosperity of an individual and or a nation are the real basis of the principles of morality.

Ethical Laws

If this problem is viewed in the historical perspective, it will be known that two tendencies have worked in the making of ethical laws; one religious tendency, second tribal tendency. According to the first, small religious tribes gradually merged into great religions. This gave birth

to such a religious morality in which some traditions, new laws under the changed circumstances and caused by rational learning were included.

The religious laws of the Hindus, the Buddhists, the Christians and the Muslims came into existence in this way. The religious laws adopted by these world religions were not all created by them. Manusamarti, the ancient book of the Hindus, shows that its religious laws were enacted according to the religious laws and the living conditions of the past. But some were codified to meet the new exigencies. The moral laws of the Buddhists were enacted on the basis of rational reasoning. Therefore, those laws were impracticable. Instead of formulating new religious laws, the Christians adopted the old Roman Laws. The Muslims made their religious code by modifying and improving ancient Arab customs and that too to their need. They neither rejected all old laws nor made new ones of their own. The religions employed two methods in order to follow these laws, one curative, the other preventive which is also called defensive. Since it is concerned with preaching, teaching and self-control, it will be discussed in detail under the same headings. Similarly, the first method which concerns with the theology of religions, it will also be taken later on while discussing this topic.

As religious tendency was responsible for the birth of composite religious laws, similarly the social laws of tribes constituted the wharp and whoop of national laws. By accepting some and rejecting others, by modifying some for the requirement and in the larger interests of nation, composite types of constitutions of different countries were prepared with certain additions. It therefore becomes clear that all moral laws, whether religious or social, are changed according to circumstances. In future too, according to the law of evolution, moral laws will be changed in accordance with the social changes.

The obstacles which the bigoted advocates of world religions wish to create in the making of these changes, cannot be lasting. These narrow-minded men cannot succeed in their unnatural attempt. But their bigotry is sure to harm their own religious order. Today, anyone who has the ability to understand the factors responsible for the changes and their speed, knows very well that the day is not far off when mankind will agree to adopt a single constitution. In such a constitution, the total laws relating to all nations and all religions will, however, be integrated.

b) Self or Emotional Desires

In the religious ethics, sublimation of self too has a special place. Self, in other words, may be called as emotional desires. The spirited men have divided it into three parts:

1. The baser self.
2. The rational self.
3. The contented self.

A description of each of them will not be out of place.

1. The Baser Self

This is concerned with the natural desires or instincts of man. A brief account of the instincts has already been given in the first chapter. The scholars of modern psychology have written hundreds of books on them. In this book, the space is too limited to summarise their findings.

The gist of all of them can be put into one sentence that the fulfilment of unchecked emotional desires endangers unity, peace and progress as a whole. Further, unrestrained desires create feelings of selfishness, discord, prejudice, violence and self-deception in the individuals. As a result of it, the whole society degenerates.

2. The Rational Self

This is a more developed stage of self which teaches man how to make the best use of his intellect and experience. Sacrifice and selfishness, unity and discord, love and hatred, immolation and coercion, pride and humility, prejudice and tolerance, self-deception and realism are distinguished through it. Further, it guides man to differentiate between what is beneficial and what is harmful for him.

But moral problems are not solved by the mere sense of good and evil. For the solution, the force of strength and courage of conviction are needed. These are acquired through proper training and sublimation of self. For acquiring right education and self-control, the mystics have recommended four methods: first, guidance from and company of a teacher; secondly, right knowledge; thirdly, prayers; fourthly, love. But before I discuss the right type of education, I think it necessary to explain what is meant by the guidance and company of a teacher.

Guidance and Company of a Teacher

From the earliest days, the system of gaining knowledge directly from a teacher has been in vogue in all the religious heirarchies. Even today, millions of men are connected in some way or other with teachers, preceptors, monks, priests and guides.

In the past, the services rendered by this institution in castigating the evil of prejudice and encouraging tolerance are known to everybody. But today the condition is different. Very few men get benefit from this institution, because the institution itself has lost its utility for a long

time and is reduced to a convention instead of a movement. Very like the theologians, it is not free from the vested interests. Therefore, no good can be expected from this institution. It can neither impart moral education nor can help in the sublimation of self. A mystic therefore felt constrained to say:

حریفان باد خورند و رفتند
تنی خم خانہ ہا کر دند و رفتند

"Gone are the cup-bearers. Empty are the cups containing the wine of love".

Being pained by this alarming situation and for the dearth of noble men, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai said:

ویاسی وینجھارھیرولعل وندین جی،
تین سندا پوٹیان شیئی لھن نہ سار
کتین کت لھارتین سندی پیٹین

"Alas! those who could test gems have gone. Their places are occupied by those who have no ability to value even a piece of an ordinary glass. Everywhere, the blacksmiths are seen now".

Teacher: An Institution

Under a system, just as the students have to attend schools, colleges and universities for a number of years so as to attain knowledge; in the same way, men belonging to all religions have been reaping the fruits of moral and spiritual education

ever since the immemorial past. This education is mostly through self-control which is also called the sublimation of self. These institutions are called by various names such as 'Khanqah', 'Ashram' etc. Higher moral values in addition to purity of self, were the main objectives there. The valuable service which this institution rendered and the respect which it commanded, no other institution has so far been able to achieve. But its popularity and respect unfortunately proved to be chiefly responsible for its decline.

People went to the monks and priests for the fulfilment of their wishes. Those wishes were birth of children, gaining of wealth, relief from diseases and solution of other problems. Instead of maintaining their position or overcoming their greed, the teachers unfortunately started bamboozling people and claimed as if they held the keys to unlock all the secrets of Nature. They deceived the innocent people through prayers, charms, incantations and recitations etc. Thus, those institutions too became the centres of frauds. It was there that different means of fraud were employed and vested interests were served. The preceptors gained the same position which the magicians had enjoyed during the primitive ages. In the field of observance, there is no place for such ridiculous things. To claim that one can control the forces of Nature is nothing short of hypocrisy.

The condition of such hypocrisies of modern times is far worse than that of the previous ages. They are neither men of sound learning, nor do they possess insight. Their institutions are centres of exploitation of the simple men and women. In these institutions, if any education is imparted, it is that of ignorance, superstition and wrong belief. They have nothing but the display of ceremonial worship, recitations, seclusions and incantations. Even then they claim themselves as the gems of morality and the source

of spiritual bliss. I do not contradict their claim, but a couplet of Mirza Ghalib is revealing:

سینہ چرخ میں بر اختر اگر دل ہے تو کیا
ایک دل ہوتا مگر درد کے قابل ہوتا

*"Every star studded in the canopy is heart of the sun.
How good it were if there would be one heart, but full
of feeling".*

3. The Contented Self

This is the stage when the self attains the highest of perfection. One who attains this height, becomes a model for others. He whose self rises to that pitch, he achieves perfection and his heart is free from pride, vanity, greed, ambition, craving for worldly possession, malice and violence. The petty prejudices of faith, nationalism, colour and caste tend to be hollow and meaningless. On the other hand, he reckons unity of mankind, peace and progress of the entire human race as the sole objective of his life. Not only that he himself holds fast the virtues of love, tolerance and humanism, but he even preaches others to imbibe them. In the words of Shah Latif Bhitai:

پریان سندی پارچی مڑیئی مٹائی،
کانہی کڑائی، چکین جی چیت کری

*"Everything in the city of the Beloved is full of sweetness.
If you know how to taste, you will not find bitterness*

anywhere”.

The man of contented self regards simplicity, truthfulness, genuine feeling and practice as the real criteria of life. He considers equivocation of words as useless. The following couplet of Bedil purports the idea:

اکران دي وچ جوئي اڙيا
عشق دي چاڙهي مورن چڙها

“Those who regard words as everything, are lost in the maze of formalities. They are not destined to ascend the heights of love”.

Those who are gifted with contented self, occupy the highest place in the realm of knowledge and wisdom, love, other refined feelings and pragmatism. Verily, such men can lead others.

Mind or Intellect and Knowledge

Very like moral education and the sublimation of self, the development and training of mind is given primary importance in the field of rituals as well.

According to the researches of scientists, Nature has been bountiful in bestowing upon the plants and animals with some degree of intelligence. The scientists call it “mind”. The sciences of Botany and Zoology have thrown much light on it. As compared to all other living things, man has certainly been more fortunate because he has been gifted with the most of intelligence.

It is interesting to note that intelligence nourishes knowledge and knowledge sharpens intelligence. The eminent scholars and men of learning have divided knowledge into

four branches:

1. Fanciful or Illusive Knowledge.
2. Intuitive Knowledge.
3. Rational or Comparative Knowledge.
4. Experimental Knowledge or Science.

1. Fanciful or Illusive Knowledge

This is a kind of knowledge which depends on the superficial observation or illusion of things. For example, it may be inferred from the observation of a moving object that its driving force is in the inner soul. It was because of this illusion that in the primitive days, the sun, the moon, the stars, the clouds, the rivers, the winds and the fire, etc., were considered as the manifestations of spirits. Similarly, various types of sounds such as the thunder of clouds, the rippling of water, the erupting sound of volcanoes, the rustle of wind and the rubbing sound of the branches of trees were attributed to the hidden forces.

The primitive belief about magic and religion was based on this very illusive knowledge. It further led to the belief of considering certain animals as propitious and unpropitious. The same belief worked in associating effects with certain worships and sacrifices. Even today, despite a lapse of hundred thousand years, very many people are in the clutches of primitive superstitions.

2. Intuitive Knowledge

For centuries, men have believed in this particular knowledge. The prophets, saints, philosophers, poets and men of lore have always been its lovers. They agree that, like other lores, it is not gained by labour or experience. But

it is attained through the divine blessing. According to the following couplet:

این سعادت بزور بازو نیست
تا نه بخشد خداے بخشنده

"This blessing cannot be enjoyed unless it is granted by God".

There is no denying the fact that some persons have unusual abilities and talents. The founders of religions, the philosophers, the theoreticians, the discoverers and the inventors of myriad things were men of the same type. But it is generally observed that some of these men of extraordinary talents are regarded as the possessors of supernatural powers. Innumerable false stories regarding their prophecies and miracles are woven around them.

If such myths are taken to be true, it would mean that the entire system of the universe is but a plaything in the hands of a few individuals. So it would tantamount to making fun of the laws of Nature. With these notions, the belief germinated and very many prophets, god-incarnates, seers, monks and priests were regarded as timeless and spaceless. They were also regarded all-embracing and free from all sort of imperfections.

The custodians of religions have been the preachers of this belief. As a result of it, the words of some men of extraordinary talents are taken as absolute truth, and testing of those words on the touch-stone of reason is deemed as a sin. Thus, a kind of intellectual dictatorship comes into being. The greatness of the prophets, of the saints and of the revivalists of religions cannot be denied. But considering them as the final authority on every subject does create

a monopoly of a particular group. The doors of reason, arguments and morality are closed, and a particular group in every religion comes forward with vested interests.

An interesting fact is that every group preaches its own creed, presenting it as a symbol of peace, progress and unity of man. But what is really deplorable that each group regards its own faith as truth and the rest of faiths as falsehood. Then each group endeavours to vindicate its own faith and condemns other faiths. The result is that it becomes an instrument of bigotry, feud and decadence.

3. Rational or Comparative Knowledge

This knowledge rests on intellect and reasoning. Philosophy, logic and dialectics, etc., are its branches. Rising from Greece and spreading to India, China, Middle East and Rome, this branch of learning has been of the prime source of information and has been largely responsible for the progress of the modern world. Men attached to religions have also used it to a limited extent. But since this knowledge may prove as a potent danger for the conventional belief and faith, therefore majority of the custodians of religion have declared it inferior to the intuitive knowledge. Hence, they have instructed their followers to keep away from it.

Some groups with vested interests use it for the intellectual exploitation of others. For example, the capitalists, the socialists, the fascists and the conservatives have employed it for their own selfish ends. This knowledge is organised in the lines of Metaphysics.

4. Experimental Knowledge or Science

This knowledge is based on mathematical analyses and experiments of physics. It is not necessary that the results deduced from this source of knowledge be treated as the last word. But just as most of formulae of mathematics are invariably correct; in the same way, the results of sciences are also accurate and reliable.

Which of the above stated branches of knowledge will be most useful for mankind? If we give a serious thought to this question, it will be known that the first kind of illusive knowledge is the product of primitive days and is useless for the present age. Neither it can give satisfaction to the cultured and progressive men, nor can it find any solution to the present day problems and affairs.

Obviously, the three kinds of knowledge were means of progress in human knowledge. But, to regard any of them as infallible, is against the law of Nature. All branches of knowledge are means to this end. Hence, it is no good to depend either on intuitive or on rational or scientific knowledge. To make the best use of every kind of knowledge with the utmost of broad-mindedness is, beyond doubt, beneficial for human beings.

The prophets, saints, philosophers, poets and reformers have been extraordinary and venerable beings. But each of them has had a particular sphere of activity. The invention of television, radio, aeroplane, electricity, atomic energy and X-ray or other feats of excellence in the fields of human civilisation and life was not their work. Therefore, the claim of the pundits, moulvis and priests that "their religions provide solutions to all human problems, and that their creeds present absolutely true and lasting ideology of life" negates the law of evolution. Such a claim has no other

purpose except to safeguard the vested interests of a few and tighten their hold.

Millions of years of human life has gathered fresh information on each problem through talent, intellect and experience. With the progress in the means of life and culture, new theories have been advanced. The endeavour for betterment is the basis of the progress of society. If this fundamental truth is ignored and the past theories are regarded as unchangeably final, there will be no room for further enquiry and research. It will amount to blocking the way of progress and well-being of the society. It will also be contrary to the preachings of religions.

If we wish, we can find out the basic unity and the principle of evolution in the sectarianism of religions, theoretical differences and the apparent conflicts between scientific researches.

No knowledge, theory or belief excels in being interpreted as limited or static. Its excellence lies in its continual flow. It should wholeheartedly accommodate new discoveries and inventions, having the ability to cater at the same time to the new demands and urges.

No nation, individual or religion has the right to claim the monopoly of knowledge, wisdom or welfare of humanity and its salvation. Truth is like a limitless sea. Whoever gets a drop of it, can justifiably feel proud of his good fortune. But it behoves him not either to show it off or to capitalise it or deprive others of the natural right to it.

The best course for us is to like those aspects of knowledge and belief which strengthen the unity of mankind, promote world peace and strive for the progress and welfare of society. Each branch of learning and ideology should discard all that which fans hatred and prejudice in the people and which leads them to dispute and dissension. At the same time, it impedes the progress of the society. Further, it induces men for personal and temporary gains.

RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES, DUTIES AND PRAYERS

The third part of religion is its prayers. Different religions have different modes of prayers. They all originated from the primitive days as we have discussed in the first chapter. In the beginning, the purpose of prayers was to control or submit to the hidden powers. But when human intelligence, society and religion progressed, prayers came to have the following purposes:

1. Seeking the will of God.
2. Self-control.
3. Contentment.
4. Salvation.
5. Redemption from Sin.

A full account of prayers and ceremonies will be presented in the fourth chapter. Here I would only say that owing to the acknowledged supremacy of reason, prayers have lost their importance in the eyes of the modern man. To the men of intellect, the very idea of approbation or disapproval of God has become meaningless, since Providence is above such human qualities.

So far as the sublimation of self through prayers is concerned, all of us observe the sanctimonious acts day and night. These are the outcome of the purified self, such pious and noble souls who never miss their prayers. It is also said about prayer that it lightens heart and the worshipper is so much spiritually elevated that he develops the ability to perceive God, the Prophet and the saints. A little thinking reveals that the idea is erroneous. It is not possible to visualise God. He is not only much beyond the ken of human perception but also much above human intellect and imagination.

Similar is the matter of sighting the Holy Prophet. At

the most, one can see him in a dream. But how can one benefit from this ceremonial sight when Abu Jehl remained benighted even in the presence of the Apostle?

The Prophet is an eternal reality. He is a blessing for humanity. Only that person is likely to gain from his image who has love for humanity, whose heart is free from prejudice and narrow-mindedness and who works sincerely for the welfare of humanity.

The third purpose of prayer is contentment of heart. Beyond doubt, millions of men find prayer heart-soothing even today, despite being poverty-stricken or suffering from different maladies. Scientists, philosophers and atheists may call it an opiate. But it is a fact that for innumerable persons, prayer serves as a psychological shield.

The fourth advantage of prayer is hope for salvation. The seers find no merit in the prayer which is made for the retribution on the Day of Judgement. Besides, the blurred concept of salvation which is held by the moulvi, pundit and clergy, is negated by the Sufis. According to Ghalib:

ہم کو معلوم ہے جنت کی حقیقت لیکن
دل کے بہلانے کو غالب یہ خیال اچھا ہے

"We know the truth about Heaven. To satisfy heart, it is not a bad idea".

The fifth purpose of prayers is redemption from sin. This idea is not only fraught with danger but harmful too. This concept of religion has provided a shield to tyrants, black-marketeers, smugglers, usurpers and unscrupulous men. The belief that the worst sins are forgiven by prayers, is against the spirit of religion.

Besides the prayers as prescribed by religions, certain

things have acquired the status of worship in some quarters. For example, discourse, thinking, contemplation, self-immolation, dance, ecstasy, music and such kindred things. It is said that these are also the means to give satisfaction to the heart. Let us accept it too. But from this comprehensive analysis of the purpose of prayers, the only thing that comes out is content of heart which is personal and short-lived. Hence, one may ask if all ado about prayers exists for this short and temporary personal gain. No, certainly not.

If we could know the real spirit of prayers as prescribed by all religions and do not get tangled into the outward form regarding it as the ultimate goal, the truth as revealed by Sheikh Saadi will dawn upon us:

دل بدست آوردن حج اکبر است
از هزاران کعبه یک دل بهتر است

"To satisfy a human heart is the greatest Hajj."

"One heart is better than thousands of Kabas".

The best and the real prayer is the mellowness of heart, love and passion. Great is the efficacy and objective of such a prayer. From such prayers, all human beings can achieve lasting peace and satisfaction in life. The dervish and truth-seekers believe in this type of prayer. What is love and passion? How can love transcend worship? I would like to throw light on these aspects.

Love and Passion

The sufis, poets, saints and yogis have always, through their media, conveyed the message of love. The main theme of their message has been love. It is as Ehsan Danish has

said:

درحقیقت ہے محبت ہی بنائے زندگی
ہے اسی کے دم سے بزمِ دہریں تابندگی

"Love is the basis of Life. All the light of the world springs from it".

It is not sheer exaggeration or flight of imagination. It is cent per cent truth. In human society, at every step of the evolution of faith and mind, the feeling of love has been the manifestation of the constructive pursuits. That is why the seers and saints feel diffident about such philosophies where religion gets muddled in words and letters. Therefore, they regard love as the soul of religion.

The God-loving saints have divided love into two parts; one worldly, the other divine. In fact, they are two branches of the same tree. One may be called a ladder or a bridge to have access to the other.

Worldly Love

Generally speaking, worldly love has been most misunderstood. Either it has been called as sheer lust or personal passion of an individual. The main cause of misunderstanding is lack of knowledge regarding its form or shape. In fact, it has three forms:

1. Love for paramour.
2. Love for nation and homeland.
3. Love for humanity.

1. Love for Paramour.

This is the first stage of worldly love. There are three reasons for this sort of love: sexual desire, feeling of companionship and temperamental affinity.

Sexual Desire

Like other living beings, Nature too has endowed man with the instinct of procreation. Owing to this instinct, opposite sexes get attracted towards each other. This attraction may also be called sexual desire. Since it is a natural desire, its fulfilment is neither a sin nor a flaw. This sexual act becomes a sin or an evil when the doer departs from the accepted laws and norms of his or her society. At the same time, his or her objective may not be permanent communion but temporary sexual pleasure. Verily, such an unbridled act may endanger peace and harmony of a society.

It is therefore in the best interest of the society to satisfy the natural sexual urge for the procreative purpose which is fulfilled by permanent association with the opposite sexes. It not only leads to unity of family, but promotes peace and progress. At the same time, it balances collective and corporate life.

Feeling of Companionship

By nature, man is gregarious. Loneliness is a curse for him. Therefore, solitary confinement is considered as a severe punishment. The basis of group-life is social feeling. This feeling impels man to find out for him a permanent companion – such a mate who shares with him the burden of life

and provides him peace and comfort. Therefore, the necessity of such a mate motivates him to lead a 'couple life'. In this form, the need for a companion or a beloved keeps confined only to the feeling of companionship, creating thereby the basic unit of the society — the family.

Temperamental Affinity

The mutual love which is engendered by unity of thought and harmony of mind, is more lasting, more constructive and more invigorating than either sexual desire or feeling of companionship. This is the reason that many people give temperamental affinity due consideration in the selection of a life-partner. They look for such a match for years and years. But such a union is generally very rare. The Hindus believe that such a union is enjoyed by those couples who have been enamoured of each other during previous births. According to Muslim dervishes, such pairs were made on the Day of Creation. Shah Abdul Latif refers to it in the words of Sohini:

الست ارواحن کي، جڏهن چيائون
ميتاقان ميهارسان، لڏيون مون لڏون
سوموئي ڪيئن پاهون، جو محفوظان معاف ٿيو

"The day the Creator created spirits, the day that the spirits made their pledge; ever since the same day, I have made Mahiwal mine. How can I go back on my promises? How can our relation of love be broken in this world?"

2. Love for Nation and Country

At this stage of temporal love, the beloved's love sublimates into a love which is collective and meaningful. In the first stage, Marvi pines for her beloved country. In the second, it is not her country but her tribe and people whose thought makes her restless. The second stage of love is far nobler than that of the first. Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai impresses the sublimity of this love through the character of Marvi in these lines:

واجهائي وطن کي، آءُ جي هت مياس،
گور منهنجي سومراءِ ڪڇ پنوهارن پاس،
ساري ڏج سرشتين، منجهان ولترين واس،
مياڻي جياس، جي وڃي مڙھ، ملير ۾،

"Oh Soomra; (the ruler of Omerkot) If I die like this in the desire to reach back my homeland in your prison, you will be as kind as to send my body to my relatives for burial, and fumigate my body by burning the grass of my country. If my body reaches Malir (the native place of Marvi), I shall believe that I have got a new life".

"You may have any opinion about them, my countrymen, they are dear to me as they are".

"Don't think that being away from them, I shall cease loving them. My body is in your palace, but my heart is in Thar (the country of Marvi), in every corner of which my countrymen are living".

"All your gifts are nothing to me. I cannot exchange the love of my country for silver and gold".

The dervishes have compared this stage of love with complete "immersion of self". This love induces one to endear national interest and shun petty personal interests.

3. Love for Humanity

This is the highest form of worldly love. At this stage, man becomes free from all narrow prejudices of group, faith and nation. He looks at the world affairs purely from human point of view. It is as if the part is lost in the whole, diversity in unity and individuality in collectivity. To quote the words of Mirza Ghalib:

عشرتِ قطرہ ہے دریا میں فنا ہو جانا

"It's the good fortune of a drop to get lost into the river"

It is from this stage that divine love starts. One who reaches not this stage, even if he poses to be a highly virtuous being, cannot attain even the least of the divine knowledge. How can a man who is not free from religious prejudice, parochial feeling, discrimination of colour and race, consideration of high and low, reach this stage through prayers and penances, especially when his heart is tainted by fear and greed, vanity and arrogance, cruelty and exploitation?

Those of the sufis who have known the meaning of the term "Rahmat-ul-lil-Aalmeen" have regarded it as a specific appellation of the Holy Prophet, are lost in the love of the Messenger of God. For the grace of the Prophet, it is necessary to be above every prejudice and distinction. Without love for humanity, it is meaningless to claim love for the Prophet.

Divine Love

Divine love is considered much higher than temporal love. It is therefore regarded as love of God. The Muslim priest adopting prayer and bead-count as his way of life, the Sufi dancing at the beat of the drum, the spiritual guide (pir) lost in meditation, the yogi practising self-restraint through regular exercise, the clergyman dedicated to the glory of the Church and the ascetic renouncing the world: all claim divine love. These claims are not only highly exaggerated, but false. The truth is that these claims are far from reality.

Kabir, a great Hindi poet, says about this tragedy in his own way:

حد حد چلا ہر کوئے، بے حد چلانہ کوئے
بے حد کے میدان میں کھڑا کبیرا روئے

‘To reach the limitless or proper knowledge of the Divine Being is an evidence of the truth about the divine love’.

The recognition of God is, in fact, the real objective of the divine love. It is rather the acme. It is not an easy task for anyone to reach that place. But it is not impossible either. One who knows the way of self-abnegation and self-recognition, can reach that stage. The sufis (mystics) have defined both the states as half-way to God. They have named these states as ‘negative’ and ‘positive’. A brief discussion of them will not be out of place here:

Self-abnegation

This state has generally been misunderstood. Some have regarded it as assassination of self; some have described it as prayer and exercise; some have taken it as renunciation of the world and some have perceived it as death. But the majority have construed it as the sublimation of self. For example, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai says:

جي پائين جرگي تيان، تہ ترڪ طمع كي ڪر
ويدي وهم وجود جاء خاصي ڏيان ڌر،
تہ ڪنهن پهچين ڀر لڪجين لاهوت ڀر

"If you want to follow the path of virtue, give up greed at once. Chasten your thought by getting rid of wishes and prejudices. Only this way you can ascend and sublimiate".

To Shah Abdul Latif, the worst evil is "greed" and he has put this condition for a devotee as the foremost. If we go into the depth, we shall know how true the great saint was. In human society, the root cause of all the troubles is greed or selfishness. The self-deception of individual-worship gives birth to it. It is widely seen that worldly love plays an effective role as compared to prayer and exercise or counselling and admonition in order to redeem oneself from the clutches of self-deception. For instance, its first stage is the need of a life-partner through which the individuality gets melted into a love, a family and a tribe. At the second stage, familial and tribal feeling gets integrated into the national feeling and, at the third stage, the national feeling transcends into the international feeling where the sole

objective is to serve the interests of the entire human race. This way the individual's identity gets merged into the collectivity. This is the real meaning of the negation of self or losing one's identity. One who feels about its greatness, cares not for any other thing.

Sachal Sarmast considers liberation from checks and restraints as the primary condition for the divine knowledge. He says:

اول ڀيري ڀڄ، جي بند خيالات جا،

تنهن ڀڄائڻ وڃ، حلاجي حيرت ۾،

"If you wish to reach the Ultimate Reality, undo the shackles of your vested interests, distinctions and prejudices which have vitiated your thoughts and feelings. Then there will be no obstruction in your way and you will reach your destination".

To sum up, to completely merge the individuality into the limitless collectivity, tantamounts to self-abnegation. This is pure renunciation, total redemption and this may as well be called absolute salvation.

Self-Recognition

The first stage of worldly love which is the 'negative state' leads to self-recognition. At this stage, the heart becomes the reflector of everything and, to the eye, every hidden thing is manifested. Every object now appears to be different and in its original colour. Sachal Sarmast describes this state in the following words:

بهرنگيءَ مون رنگ، پسو جو پيدا ڏاٿو،

ظاهر ۾ ٻيو رنگ، موسيٰ ۽ فرعون جو،

"Wonderful is the sight of that colour which appears after colourlessness. The traits of Moses and Pharoah are different in manifestation".

Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai speaks through the mouth of Sassi, one of his immortal characters:

پیمہی جان پاں پر کیم روح رهاں،
تہ نکوڈ ونگرڈ یہم نکا کیتی کاں،
پنہون تیس پاں سٹی تان سورہٹا

"When I was lost in the world of my existence, truth about me dawned on me. Now, no mountains obstruct my way nor do I look for anything. I, myself, am now Punno (her male paramour); so long as I was Sussi, I continued to feel the pangs of separation".

This state of love is called "ecstasy". At this stage, the devotee not only gets the divine knowledge, but he becomes a part of the Real, the Absolute. It is also called the "position of Mansoor". In this context, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai says:

سوہی، سوہو، سواجل، سوانہ،
سوپرین، سوپساہ، سوویری، سوواہڑا

"He is This, He is That, He is Negative, He is Positive, He is Beloved, He is Enemy, He is Helper too. He is Everything. There exists nothing except Him".

At this stage, somebody raised the cry of "Baqā Billah" (only God exists) and somebody uttered "Ana-al-Haq" (I am Right 'God'). Again, like Mirza Ghalib, somebody said:

قطرہ اپنا بھی حقیقت میں ہے دریا لیکن
ہم کو منظور تک نظر ہی منصور نہیں

"The drop as I am, is as big as a river, But I am not a claimant like Mansoor".

As it is revealed in the Holy Quran

لَمْ تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ

"Such sayings which are not practicable are of no use", one should lead a practical life, and at the same time try to reach the Ultimate Reality. The right thing will be when these realities and sublimities are made common and the whole world gets the maximum advantage from them. Everything should be done for the collective gain and everyone should be made to act. Action is indeed much nobler and higher than prayer. All the religions undoubtedly stress on it. In the words of Allama Iqbal:

عمل سے زندگی بنتی ہے جنت بھی جسم بھی

"Action makes life; it leads to Heaven or Hell".

The sum and substance of these lines is that the source of sublimation of self, peace of mind and knowledge of the reality is love – love for mankind. The best prayer is service to humanity. It not only tells about dignity of man, but at the same time, it paves the way for peace, progress and prosperity of mankind.

JURISPRUDENCE

This aspect of religion is related to the conventional and social codes. The religions which are no longer dynamic and have become static, their advocates generally stress on century-old conventional and social codes. The preachers of some of religions regard those codes as the real religion.

But since human society and its urges are not always the same, time keeps on changing, most of the laws and codes of the past have lost their usefulness in the present time; therefore, despite the obstinacy of the misguided preachers, many countries are shaping out the laws anew so as to be in conformity with the urges and conditions of the present times. The religious codes of the past have practically ceased to exist.

In the advanced society of today, the Christian who talks of the Biblical period or the Hindu who talks of the period of Manusamriti or the Muslim who talks of the early days of Islam, is either totally ignorant or he is completely incapable of reading the writings on the wall. If either is not the case, then behind this call, he has his vested interests. For the fulfilment of his objective, he is intently deceiving his co-religionists.

Chapter 3

UNITY AND DIVERSITY OF RELIGION

Such men who believe in religion, can be divided into two groups. This division is made from the point of view of their faith. One group believes in the diversity of religions and therefore attaches all importance to the differences manifested in religions. The other group regards these differences as mere superficial. But at the same time, it tries to find out the unifying factors which are common in all religions. Which of these two groups has a positive approach and which the negative one, which of these groups fulfils the divine will and which acts contrary to it, which of these groups aims for the betterment of mankind and which does not do so, are such questions which we shall have to discuss in a more comprehensive manner.

Diversity of Religion: Theory of Variation

As it should have been evident from the preceding pages, all religions have originated from superstitions and dogmas. Similarly, social and moral codes, prayers and observances went a long way to shape religions. These beliefs and

rituals were prevalent in the tribal societies of the past. It was but natural that different societies adopted different ways so as to satisfy their inner urges. This way, innumerable major and minor religions came into being. A large number of them vanished with the passage of time because they were either not practicable or they lacked the power to retain their hold. But if the mushroom religions of the past are ignored, we cannot lose sight of the major religions of the world which are still surviving. At the same time, if the sects of these religions are taken into account, their number will run into hundreds. Therefore, the differences which exist among the religions and their sects, cannot be denied.

With regard to these distinctions, there appear to be two attitudes. One of them is that of integration or centralisation. The other is of disintegration or decentralisation. In other words, we may call them as view for 'unifying' or 'diversifying' of religions.

As in politics, there are people who give priority to their individual gains or they serve the interests of their groups. But, at the same time, there are men who work for the gains of the whole society. Similarly, there are a large number of men in the field of religion too, who don't possess the power to perceive much farther and are contented to keep themselves confined to certain formalities of religion. But, undoubtedly, there are very few who are dedicated to the service of humanity. Thus, to the first group, belong the overwhelming majority of the believers whose limited vision does not allow them to comprehend any more except that all religions differ, whereas the other group of the believers, though comparatively much smaller in size yet far superior in intellect, finds that unity is everywhere pervading in all religions. In this way, the first group preaches about the diversity of religion while the second group about unity and accord. I shall not dwell at this

place about the second group but throw light as to why and how umpteen religions have sprung up.

Since religious groups are formed voluntarily on the basis of certain beliefs, rituals, social and ethical codes, therefore, the organization of each religious group is made on the following lines:

- 1) That the founder of religion and his close companions are projected as super-natural beings. It is the bounden duty of the followers to emulate those models.
- 2) That the teachings of the founder of each religion and his close associates are treated as works of transcendent intellect; the eternal truth in their words is considered as the pillar of faith.
- 3) That religious and social codes as prescribed by the founder of each religion and his associates are regarded as the very source of salvation.
- 4) That each religious group becomes convinced that only its own faith is rightful and legitimate and all other religions and sects are false and spurious. Therefore, it negates and condemns all other religions and sects of the world.

As a result of emphasis on these points, each religious denomination has been the adherent of its own set beliefs and social conduct. It cannot also be denied that religious groups are without their own vested interests. In such a situation, it is natural for a variety of sects to emerge. When the sects have emerged, a feeling of rivalry becomes inevitable and each sect tries to establish its own supremacy:

For convenience and recognition, as a big continent is divided into countries and a country is further divided into divisions and sub-divisions; similarly, sects and schisms are bound to exist so long as religions continue to exist.

Unity and Diversity of Religion

As the right of self-determination is an established fact in the world of today, all the religions are sure to enjoy their freedom with their set beliefs, modes of prayers and observances. People believing in each faith should be free to uphold their values and religious ways according to their own liking. Sheer distinction of faith and mode of prayer should not be the cause of conflict in human society. Peace is disturbed when a religious or sectarian group tries to impose its own ideology on others and, for justifying its own action, it upholds the use of force and violence as a great virtue. Such a notion subverts the real spirit of religion and religious groups become the means of exploitation.

There are still some men who force others to share their beliefs. In their endeavour to spread their religion or sect, they employ violent methods too. To their striving, they give the name of jihad. But such a practice is absolutely against the teaching of Islam. In the Quran, there is the explicit mention that there is no compulsion in matters of religion. At another place, the same injunction is couched into the words, "*For you, your own religion: for me, mine*". The way Islam has forcefully expressed about religious toleration and accommodation of other faiths, no learned person can deny it. The famous saying of the Prophet of Islam, "*Differences are great blessings for my followers*" and the Quranic words, "*It has specific injunctions for each nation and faction*" are sufficient proofs regarding this argument.

If there be religious toleration, the diversity of religion is very likely to lend grace to this world as the assortment of variegated flowers makes a bouquet all lovely. It is not only the comeliness of the bouquet which the eyes of on-lookers are feasted with but, at the same time, each on-looker derives much pleasure from the fragrance of his choicest flower. To my mind, all religions are like a bou-

quet of flowers wherein each religion is like a beautiful flower. A flower has its own identity; but in a bouquet, its identity gets merged with other flowers.

One who understands Islam in its true perspective, does not regard even the most insignificant object in the creation of God as mean and contemptible. On the other hand, he tries to make utmost use of everything. The true believer is that who believes man to be the vicegerent of God and His best creation. Further, he does not ignore the fundamental fact that:

- 1) Religion is created for man and not man for religion.
- 2) One should try to get maximum advantage from all faiths, philosophies, precepts, ideas and sciences.
- 3) No faith, precept or idea is eternal nor can it be identically useful for all ages. Religious laws go together with the law of evolution. These laws can neither be unnecessarily stretched nor shrunk. However, if any faith, philosophy or idea obstructs the progress and prosperity of mankind, it tends to be unnatural and is finally discarded.

Theory concerning the Unity of Religion

As I have stated earlier, there have been such men throughout the stages of the evolution of man and in different regions of the world who have risen above the petty prejudices and differences of religions. They have whole-heartedly devoted themselves to the promotion of peace and progress of the whole human race. These great men have reflected over the mysteries of Nature, over man's existence, over his past and future. They have also tried to understand the evolution of society and have also perceived unity in the diversity of religions.

Arcane Knowledge

It is an admitted fact that talents and mental potentialities of people have differed in all ages. Some are cultured, learned and men of insight; others are uncultured, ignorant and bigoted. People in the second category have always been in a large majority while the first type of people have been fewer in number. Not only in talents these groups have differed, but this difference has been perceptible in their beliefs, view points and in all other ways of life. One made the ephemeral and superficial things as the basis of religion; the other group found the fundamental principles of religion of supreme value. The one cared for the present, the other for the future.

Some of the teachings and preachings of the prophets are for the masses and some for the elites. It is because some of the teachings meant for the men of learning are beyond the comprehension of the masses. As intellect and power of comprehension differ in persons, therefore, religious concepts, beliefs, duties and responsibilities are also different.

After some time, when religions and their sects acquire the shape of bodies with their vested interests, it becomes expedient for their leaders or exponents to dominate all other men. In an endeavour to perpetuate power, the rulers, religious leaders and capitalists of kindred faith help each other since their interests are common. They do not encourage any such thing which promotes the spirit of toleration among the masses or which debilitates superstitions and prejudices. They keep on nurturing the evils because, to these evils, they consider as a means for the safeguard of their interests. Through these evils they incite people against such men who are generally dedicated to the well-

being of the masses. This is the reason that the saints unlocked the secret of their bosoms to a selected few and refrained from open publicity on the mass level. These saints can be divided into two groups:

- a) The Introvert Saints.
- b) The Extrovert Saints.

The Introvert Saints (Saliks)

The saints of this group have expressed their thoughts through signs and symbols. According to the circumstances, they have adopted such a way of expression so that the prejudices of people are not disturbed and yet, at the same time, the learned men see the light.

The introvert saints were fully conscious of the prevailing condition, especially of the menacing terror of the vested interests and vicious prejudices as created by the men in power. These vested interests were highly detrimental to human race. It becomes all the more virulent when, in the first place, the society is dominated by men of low morality; secondly, the servile minds of the masses, being under their baneful influence, have no capacity for toleration. In this state of affairs, the saints could not be altogether silent, but they could not freely express either. It is for this reason that they adopted this way so as to kill two birds with one stone. At every step, they felt threatened by the men with vested interests. Therefore, they selected signs and symbols for the communication. They succeeded in conveying their message and were safe from the mischief of the exploiters.

The Extrovert Saints (Majzoob)

These saints were guided more by passion than reason. They disseminated knowledge openly and fearlessly. They knew very well that their teachings would strike at the roots of superstitions and narrow-mindedness. As a result of it, the fury of exploiters would be let loose. In spite of these odds, the saints had confidence in the truth of their mission and in the innate love of people for justice. Although the masses have little power of analysis and it is time-consuming to elicit truth out of variegated speeches, the fact is that the masses are generally exploited because they are gullible and lack memory. But they are essentially good-natured and have feeling hearts. The extrovert saints had a feeling that the masses would not immediately listen to them, but when the exploiting priests and rulers made them the target of their aggression, they would really awake. This was the reason that the extrovert saints openly preached their faith irrespective of the consequences. With a great fortitude, they not only faced the atrocities of the exploiters, but proved that punishment was no remedy. Advocating the cause of such valiant souls, Mirza Ghalib said:

تغزیرِ جمِ عشق ہے بیکارِ محاسب
بڑھتا ہے اور ذوقِ گناہیں مرا کے بعد

"O Judge! useless is the charge of love; punishment further augments the lust for sin in me".

Beyond doubt, one who adopts this way, is either a lunatic or a person unmindful of his consequences. But the exploiters are not contented with sheer punishment of the saints; they are bent upon killing and throttling

their freedom. That is why the extrovert saint has a burning desire for making the maximum use of time. Waiting for the future, he is not ready to pass the present in silence. Therefore, he takes a rebellious attitude. To the extrovert saint, whatever chance is available, he makes the utmost use of it. He preaches truth and preaches it most fearlessly. He is ever conscious of the fact that time is fleeting.

Now the question arises as to what were those teachings which the introvert saints made through signs and the extrovert saints preached openly, thus exposing and jeopardising the vested interests of the professional priests and men of ruling classes. In my opinion, the sum and substance of this kind of preaching was that "the Creator is the Real Being and, except Him, there exists nothing. All other manifestations are His own Attributes". Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai expresses the same idea in his following words:

عاشق چو مَرانِ کي، مَر کي چو معشوق،
خالق چو مَرخامتون مَر کي چو مخلوق،
سلج تنهن سلوک، جو ناقصائي نڳيو،

"He is neither a Lover nor a Beloved; neither the Creator nor the Created; neither these are saintly secrets and things are beyond the comprehension of insensate hearts".

Apparently, this is a simple matter. But if we believe in it with all sincerity, everything appears to be a manifestation of the One and the same Being. The duality of the Creator and the created disappears. Religion, colour, race, nation and motherland lose all distinctions and the whole human race comes to be established as different limbs of a body. All arguments of hatred, prejudice and enmity are regarded as futile. Religious concepts of reward and punishment, Heaven and Hell lose their importance. Since the paid

priests and the rulers cannot thrive on the promotion of these beliefs, therefore they regard such an education as outrageous to religion and faith.

Only the saints and the seers could approach the Divine Knowledge. Among the Muslims, Hazrat Ali was the only one who knew the secrets of the Holy Prophet. The saying of the Prophet of Islam, "*I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gateway*" is a reflection of the same truth.

In fact, this is the very principle of this creed. In it, the knowledge about realities or secrets are transferred from bosom to bosom; from teacher to disciple. This kind of knowledge is gained through companionship and through love.

Among the men of learning, the Vedantists, the Pantheists and the Mystics have shed ample light on this subject. Among the old philosophers, Plato was the person and, in the present times, Spinoza and neo-Platonist philosophers have also discussed the issue at length. In the East, Swami Viveka Nand and some other among the Hindus and Mohi-uddin Ibne Arbi among the Muslims, have tried to prove it in a philosophical way. Further, Sarmad, Shah Enayat, Sachal Sarmast and a few others have been the preachers and message-bearers of this creed. In other religions too, such noble men have existed.

The readers are urged to bear in mind the fact that the lovers of truth and the spiritual guides have always been opposed to the bigotry of religion because it breeds ill-feeling and hatred among men. But these saints and their teachings were ever defied by the rulers and the monopolists of religion, therefore, they employed each and every weapon to curb the teachings of the saints.

Among the Muslims, Imam Ghazali and Mujaddid Alif Thani have presented philosophical arguments in favour of the establishment of religious state. Among the Hindus, the scholars of Arya Samaj have laid stress on "Aryan Cul-

ture". Similarly in the Christian world, there were movements such as "Renaissance" and "Reformation".

In this book, I shall keep myself confined to the origin and development of the concepts of Wahdat-ul-Wajud and Wahdat-ul-Shahood. Other religious movement can be understood in their light.

Wahdat-ul-Wajud

The propounder of this concept, among the Muslims, was Sheikh Mohiuddin bin Ali Ibne Arbi. He is known by the title of Sheikh-ul-Akbar. Ibne Arbi was born in Southern Spain in 565 Hijra corresponding with 1164 A.D. in the city of Meritha. It is said that he was a descendant of Hatim Tai. In 586 Hijri, he became a disciple of Shaikh Abu Bakr bin Khazab in Lisbon, the capital of Portugal. In those times, Sultan Mohammed was the Governor of Eastern Spain. After finishing his early education, Ibne Arbi went to Sayut where he gained further education at Cardova. Then he went to Fez in Morocco. Therefrom he migrated to Alexandria in Egypt, and finally, he settled at Damascus in Syria. He died there in 638 H. i.e. 1240 A.D. He was buried at Jabl Qasian in the cemetery of Qazi Mohiuddin.

In Islamic mysticism, the precept of Wahdat-ul-Wajud was expounded by him in a philosophical manner. Afterwards, this concept spread all over the Muslim countries. But it would not be right to say that it did not exist before him. The Muslim mystics believe that it was tutored to Imaim Ali by the Prophet and, from him, it kept on moving from heart to heart. Mansoor, Hallaj, Shams Tabrez, Khawaja Farid-uddin Attar openly preached it. But its philosophical exposition was first made by Ibne Arbi. His famous book entitled "Fasusul Hukm" is a work of immense value and is worth reading.

The theory of Wahdat-ul-Wajud is also called the theory of "All is He" which means that "the only existence is the Absolute or All-existent". This 'Absolute-existence' is God. Nothing exists except Him. The universe is a manifestation or a shadow of His light which is called the world of attributes and this world has no existence beyond Him; the slogan of the advocates of this theory is "There is no existence except Allah".

As inseparable is the reflection of man's face into the mirror, his shadow on the earth, the echo of his voice; similarly, His attributes are not different from Him and they are the reflections of the Real Being.

As regards the effect of this theory on conventional religion and politics, its discussion will not be uninteresting. Since, according to this theory, the reality of everything is one, therefore instead of hatred and discord, its believers find a universal bondage of love and amity. They expose the secret of unity which is hidden behind diversity. This theory cuts the roots of religious bigotry dividing men and creating very many differences among them. It also leaves no room for exploitation in the name of religion. Thus, it castigates the rulers, the exploiters, the monopolists of religion and all those who suck blood in the name of religion. Such classes, when they see their interests at stake, get secretly united and they employ all means in order to stifle the voice of truth-lovers. It is an irony that the teachings of the truth-tellers have always been obstructed by the religious monopolists. But it is also a fact that whenever the professional religious group tried to exploit the religious sentiments to the extreme, thus spreading bigotry and narrow-mindedness, the believers of Wahdat-ul-Sajud also assumed an equally serious tone. A poet said:

بت خانہ کھود ڈالے، مسجد کو ڈھسائے
دل کو نہ توڑیئے، یہ خدا کا مقام ہے

*"Pull down a temple or demolish a mosque,
But don't hurt the heart, it's the abode of God".*

Abdul Hamid Adam, giving vent to the same feeling,
said:

جی خوش ہوا ہے مسجد ویراں کو دیکھ کر
میری طرح خدا کا بھی خانہ خراب ہے

*"Pleased I am to see a deserted mosque,
Like mine, the House of God too is in a bad shape".*

The Mansoor of Sind, Hazrat Sachal Sarmast, being pained
by the bigotry of the so-called religious men, said:

جذہاں منبر، مسجد، مناری، ویران نہ تئیں،
حال حقانی میان سچو حاصل نہ تیوی،

*"The pulpit, mosque, minaret have lost their value because
they articulate everything except truth and love".*

Wahdat-ul-Shahood

Another name of this concept is "Everything is from Him". According to it, all existing things are the creation of God. The Absolute is God. He is above all creation and is Holy and High. The world of attributes cannot be associated with Him. Spirit and matter are two separate things.

Unity and Diversity of Religion

First of all, this theory finds expression in virtue and vice, atonement and sin, reward and punishment. Then it advances further, and adding intensity to the collective belief of faith and infidelity, it influences social and political life. Religious institutions consider it their duty to redeem people from "infidelity" and set them "to the path of truth". In order to bring people to their fold, the monopolists of religion first use preaching, and subsequently, force. To them, unity tends to be sheer superstition and innumerable manifestations as the Absolute Reality. On this basis, they accept the distinctions of high and low, of all and sundry.

So far as it is a question of organizational set up among the like-minded individuals and groups, it is useful. But the fact is that the belief never remains confined to the lives of its believers. Later on, these beliefs create disturbance and discord in society. History is a witness that, after a stage, the concept is subjected to extremism. This idea or kindred ideas lead to sects and schisms within a religious order or a race which creates violence. Blind following of a sect has sometimes brought to surface the fascists who have disturbed peace and harmony of the world. The growth of this concept in religion has been extremely detrimental to the freedom of expression, freedom of conscience, democracy and broad-mindedness. Fascism has, in fact, given birth to very many distinctions such as high and low among the individuals, superiority and inferiority complexes among the races.

As far as my opinion goes, both of the concepts have retarded human society. People interested in Wahdat-ul-Wajood should also read, in addition to their own literature works on Yoga, the Bhagvad Gita, addresses of Swami Vivekanand and of Swami Ram Tirath, works of Plato, Spinoza, Neo-Platonists, etc.

Rational or Method of Scientific Research

In the chapter devoted to the 'History of Religion', it has been discussed how religions originated and how their customs, rituals and laws evolved with the passage of time. Through researches on these evolutionary stages, the scientists have tried to prove that beliefs and codes, resulting from hope and fear, have gradually developed. This development will continue in future too. Like chemistry and biology, the scientists also treat religion as a field of learning related to the social and mental evolution. Despite being divided into different beliefs and codes of conduct, it has a fundamental unity and is ever-developing. As the theories and generalizations in other branches of learning were rejected or accepted after tests and experiments, similarly there have been acceptance and rejection in the religious beliefs too, and it will continue to be. The social codes or set of beliefs in no religion are eternal. It is the law of evolution that prompts everything to change.

According to the mystics, Islam is also natural, progressive and changing in its laws. It has opened new vistas according to the exigencies of times. Its fundamental principles are world peace, unity and progress of mankind. That is why the title of the Prophet of Islam is "Blessing for the worlds" and the God of Muslims is "Preserver of the worlds" whose mercy and blessings are equally for the whole world. The Quran says

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ
وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ۝

"Those who have believed, meaning thereby that those who have become Muslims, and those who have followed Judaism, Christianity and other religions and have believed in God and the world Hereafter and have done good deeds, will be rewarded by God and they will get salvation".

In spite of this clear expression of the Quran, the assumption that only some or special sects or followers of only one religion have the right of salvation, and among these followers are usurpers, adulterers, tyrants, corrupt and unscrupulous men, is not only a wishful thinking but against natural justice as well.

According to the Muslim mystics and the scientists, the true religion, ever since its beginning, has been the same which is even to this day, and shall remain the same. Its various expositions and forms are only appearances. In a garden, just as various flowers add to its comeliness, so do variegated beliefs enhance the lustre of religion. The option should be given to the individual as to which particular flower he chooses for himself. Nobody should be allowed to monopolise the orchard i.e. religion. Nor should any one object to the choice of a flower. The whole orchard is a common possession of the entire mankind. None can be deprived of the right to its use.

A question arises as to how these conflicting ideas in unity and diversity of religions be put to an end. We see that by now, two attempts have been made in this connection. The one is positive but the other negative. As regards the positive attempt, some men have thought that the best points of all religions be put together. But very many men have endeavoured to force upon the world their own beliefs or sectarian feelings.

Both of these attempts have, historically speaking, failed. The attempts made by Guru Nanak, Kabir, the Muslim mystics, Raja Ram Mohan Rai have led to formation of more religious groups. On the other hand, the great religions of the world which include Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam, inspite of converting millions of people and gaining the status of international religions, could not unite the entire human race, nor could they root out prejudices and differences. It is vain to think that, in future, all the people of the world will come to the fold of a single religion. The means by which religions spread are power, preaching and birth-rate. In the world of today, there is no such religion which either wields so much power or has such an appeal so as to attract the whole human race. The expansion of a religion largely depends upon the birth-rate of its followers. But it too has its limit. A religion can be reckoned a force when all its followers adopt a homogenous economic and political system and they rally round a personality. But, for the major religions of the world, it has neither been possible, nor can it be possible in future.

In these conditions, there remains only one way of promoting peace, progress and welfare of mankind e.f. co-existence. The institutionalised religions should give up vested interests. Religion should be regarded as a right of an individual. The beliefs of other religions and sects should be respected. Narrow-mindedness and bigotry be shunned, and there should be a broad-based co-operation in the larger interest of peace and prosperity. To sum up through a couplet:

حافظا اگر وصل خواہی صلح کن با خاص و عام
بمسلمانان اللہ با برہمن رام رام

Unity and Diversity of Religion

*"If peace is to be promoted among all the beings,
Let the Muslims call Allah and the Brahmins Ram".*

Chapter 4

TWO INTERPRETATIONS OF ISLAM

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad writes in the Preface to "The Life of Sarmad, the Martyr".

"In Asia, politics has always been working behind the curtain of religion. Thousands of events of bloodshed were covered under the mantle of religion. During the thirteen hundred years of Islam, the pen of the jurists has been like a naked sword. The blood of thousands of lovers of truth was shed on their verdict. Read the history of Islam of any period, you will get thousands of such examples that wherever any ruler decided to shed blood, the pen of the jurist and the sword of the general were with him. Not only the Sufis (mystics) and national leaders were made the targets, even those scholars who were critical and realistic, were made to suffer hardships at the hands of jurists, and they were relieved after being beheaded".

The present age is in no way different. The way in which men have been misled in the name of Islam, is known to men of understanding. Shah Latif says:

حقيقت هن حال جي، جي ظاهر ڪريان ڌري،
لڳي مات مرن ڪي، ڏونگر پون ڌري،
”جن وٺ ٻري، اوڀر اڀري ڪين ڪي.“

“If I reveal the slightest fact about the condition, not only men but animals will be dumb-founded mountains will melt, trees will get burnt and grass will cease to grow”.

However, if we think seriously on this problem, we shall discover that all the ills are due to wrong interpretation of Islam. I think that appropriate time has come when truth should be most clearly put before the people.

In our country, people are openly misled in the name of Islam. From time to time, cries of forming a theocratic government are raised with all hypocrisy. This baseless and misleading stunt has so much so confused the problems of the country that the situation has become really alarming. The well-wishers of the country are worried, but it is of no avail. There is only one way to change the situation; Islam should be interpreted in its right perspective. This way alone, one can draw right conclusion.

Beyond doubt, for achieving peace, progress and prosperity, religion occupied the highest place in the past. These were the very objectives of the major religions of the world. But, unfortunately these objectives were put aside and religions were used for the vested interests of either individuals or groups of exploiters. As a result of it, despite the outward progress of religions, there exists among men discord in place of unity, hatred in place of love, superstition in place of reason, confusion in place of order. It is evident that religions were not an end by themselves, but they were the means of attaining unity, peace and progress of mankind.

Islam is also one of the world religions. Like the followers of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Communism, the Muslims too believe that their religion, apart from being a complete code of life, has the best philosophy. Thus, it is the only way of salvation for the human race. According to this claim, very like other religions, two interpretations of Islam have been presented as well.

One interpretation has invariably been made by the exploiting rulers, and the so-called scholars with their own vested interests. The other interpretation has been that of the Sufis (mystics) who assuaged the hearts of the teeming millions and were the true lovers and well-wishers of people.

The first group was responsible not only for the birth of various religions and sects, but for differences among them. On the contrary, the second group has been striving to unify the divided men on account of religious differences into the bond of love, signifying the basic unity hidden behind the diversity of religions. Here is a summary of the interpretations presented by the ruling classes and their appointed religious commentators:

1. They regard Islam as the last and the only true religion in the world, insisting that all other religions are false and discredited.
2. They stress that Islam is the solution of all the ills and it is a complete code of life.
3. They consider Quran as the store-house of all knowledge and teachings for this world and Hereafter. So they emphasise on the understanding of the Quran, the word of God revealed to the Prophet. They believe that it contains the solutions of all the problems of all ages and these solutions are final and eternal.
4. They insist on calling Prophet Mohammad not only the last of all the prophets, but also as the last reformer and

guide. They prescribe some of the words and acts of the Holy Prophet as binding in all cases.

5. They claim that the Muslims are the favourite creatures of God. Their fanciful mind leads them to think that, as a single nation, the Muslims are exemplary and exalted. Further, they are destined to lead the world. This leadership shall continue till the Doomsday.
6. Not only that they reckon Islam as the only true and legitimate religion, they regard all those outside its fold as misguided and accursed. They consider it as their religious duty to show the misguided ones the right path and spread Islam all over the world. At the same time, they regard preaching and fighting for their religion as a righteous act.
7. So as to keep religion and politics under their thumb, these exploiters insist on yoking together the spiritual and temporal spheres. They regard the Caliph as the representative of the Prophet. Similarly, they consider the Muslim king as the "Shadow of God", insisting on his obedience and claiming this obedience as a religious obligation. In the same way, they consider the interpretation of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet as the sole right of their favourite scholars.

As compared to this group, the interpretation given by the Sufis (Muslim mystics) is summarised as under:

1. God, the Almighty, has kept on sending His messengers in each and every tribe, nation and in every age. The basic aim of the preachings of the prophets has been the well-being of humanity. Despite the apparent variations in their laws, this reality is manifest from the religious order of each of them. Islam too has conveyed the message for the manifestation of the same reality.
2. Every man is a vicegerent of God in this world. Thus, he emits the light of God. Just as the sunlight or air

cannot be the monopoly of any particular tribe or nation, similarly the message of universal brotherhood, peace and welfare of mankind cannot be the exclusive right of a particular religion or sect. To associate it with a particular religion or sect, is to negate the law of Nature and the spirit of Islam.

3. Religion means leading life according to voluntarily accepted beliefs. To preach the belief of any religion through government or collective organizations, to force it on people by law or power, is against the right of individual freedom which is given by God. Only that preaching can be appreciable which has respect for individuality and which is based on mutual understanding, love, tolerance and service. Good preaching is that which aims at winning hearts. Good manners make good preaching. It is therefore necessary that politics and religion be kept apart. Religion is a personal and other worldly affair of individuals; it has nothing to do with collective or national affair.
 4. By associating the natural religion to one group and calling that group a nation and confining it to some customs of a society is against the fundamental aim of religion. Every man of firm faith and good character is loved by God, whatever be his apparent religion. Similarly, God does not love that man who is wicked and bad in conduct, even if he pretends to be a follower of Islam. Hence, in the eyes of these mystics, the narrow bounds of religions are because of wrong and misleading objectives.
 5. The Sufis (Muslim mystics) therefore believe that all that which is based on selfishness or all that which creates bad blood and ill-feeling among fellow men and all that which obstructs unity, peace and progress of mankind, is gross infidelity; even if it is done in the name of Islam.
- After presenting the main points of the interpretations of

the two groups, I shall now put some arguments in favour of the interpretation of the second group, showing too the falsity of the first one:

If the state of affairs is not analysed with jaundiced eyes and the problem is impartially studied in its real perspective, we shall know that the real cause of the backwardness of very many Muslim countries like Pakistan is the absolutely wrong interpretation of Islam by the exploiters and the belief of the simple-minded and gullible masses in that interpretation. This practice is not the product of the present times, it has been in existence ever since the death of the Prophet. The Prophet, besides being the Messenger of God, was gifted with unusual capacity for administration. Therefore, in his person were combined the tasks of Prophet-hood and that of administrator which he very ably performed. But, after his demise, when the prophethood ceased, people got divided into two groups about propagation of religion and conduct of state affairs. Ever since that time, two interpretations started. One group, as conditions suited it, advocated the organization and propagation of religion through government while the other group, regarding religion as a personal affair, laid emphasis on making Islam attractive through good preaching and good conduct. It advocated exclusion of religion from politics.

The first group, putting together religion and politics, made warfare as its basic policy. The members of that group diverted the whole attention of the Muslims towards conquest and material wealth which was acquired by loot. Further, they employed the means of force, coercion, concession and temptation so as to bring to the fold of Islam the non-Muslims. Through the converts made by such means, they measured the progress of Islam. The second group, on the other hand, did not believe in increasing the number of the Muslims in this way. Instead of attaching importance to the customary beliefs and traditional mode

of life, this group stressed on reflecting over the mysteries of Nature and the purpose of creation. The men belonging to this group devoted their lives to the service of humanity and they won the hearts of people by their winsome manners. They voluntarily devoted themselves to the task of training talented and conscientious individuals. Much above the craving for fame and false show, they abstained from power and other worldly temptation, thus preferring simplicity as a way of life.

Since the ignorant, the narrow-minded, the superstitious and the power-worshipper have been in the majority, therefore, the interpretation of the ruling class has prevailed. Similarly, since the number of the conscientious, the selfless, the fearless and people caring not for power and pelf has always been less, therefore, the interpretation of Islam of the second group has been limited.

The moderate ones in the second group, however, continued to preach despite the ruthlessness of the ruling class and unbridled sentiments of the masses. Whatever they could not preach openly, they conveyed through symbolic and garbled language. But to this group also belonged those who did not believe in expediency; and caring the least for consequences, they pronounced nothing but truth. To such persons, the rulers and commentators of religion, regarded as rebels. They were denounced by the rulers and the so-called custodians of religion, they were subjected to the worst privations and sufferings, torture and killing. Hazrat Imam Hussain, Mansoor, Hallaj, Shams Tabrez, Sarmad, Shah Enayet Soofi and Makhdoom Bilal are just few names in the brilliant galaxy of such lovers of truth. Ibne Abbas, to quote Bokhari, once said:

"I have been told such things by the Prophet which if I reveal today, I shall be killed".

Hafiz Sherazee expresses this situation in the following words:

مصلحت نیست که از پرده بروی افتد راز
ورنه در مجلس زندان خبر نیست که نیست

"There should be no expediency in unravelling the truth. The truth-tellers have never cared for any expediency, otherwise truth should have never dawned".

The exponent of truth, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai says in this context:

"O Friend! my secret should not come on lips. Men of poor understanding shall not be able to reach its depths, but they will become deadly enemies".

This state of affairs is an undeniable evidence of the fact that due to conquest, coercion and concession, the number of Muslims only in name went on increasing every day; but the number of those who knew the real teachings of Islam and who practised Islam, has ever been limited to a few. This is the reason that, in the opinion of the historians, the so-called Islamic governments of most of the Muslims rulers, had no relation with the real teachings, objectives and spirit of Islam. The same situation is prevailing even today.

Now let us test the interpretation of the exploiters on the touch-stone of reason and logic so as to ascertain its merits and demerits. As stated in the previous chapter, the first and specific slogan of this group of opportunists is that Islam is the last and the only true religion. I shall therefore divide it into two parts: what religion is; secondly, the reality of this slogan.

What is Religion?

This subject is very wide. Innumerable books have been written on this topic. Many are being written. I have already thrown sufficient light on this subject. But to refresh the memory of the reader, I recount the points again.

Historical and scientific researches have brought this

fact to light that man has been living on the surface of the earth for millions of years. In contrast to it, three religions of the world namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam trace the beginning of man from Adam. It is said that God moulded Adam out of clay and infused soul into him. After that, human race began. Being the prototype, Adam, was the first man and also the first Prophet of God. According to this belief, the genelogical order which the Muslims present, Adam was created only 7,500 years ago. This fallacy is entirely against scientific and historical researches.

With regard to the existence of man, which of the two contradicting facts is to be believed? That which is a mere conventional belief or the fact which is based on knowledge and research? As a matter of fact, the world has advanced so much that except the ignorant or those who are bound within their narrow limits, no one can dare to refute the scientific facts. The hold of science has become so strong that the religious scholars have started interpreting the old conventional beliefs in new ways. However, by means of recent scientific research, traces of the existence of man for two hundred thousand years have been proved. We cannot say at this stage what further age of the evolution of man will be determined in future.

Believing in the evidence of historical and scientific research, I am convinced of the existence of man on earth for millions of years. Hence I believe in the scientific investigation which shows that man evolved from the shape of animals to his present physical and mental state. Beyond doubt, it should have taken for him millions of years to reach this stage of development. In the early stages, man would have been leading nomadic life in the regions where water was available but his life was altogether savage. I agree with the viewpoint of the anthropologists that, during that stage of development, his increasing power of speech and needs, coupled with developing mental prowess, gave

birth to certain beliefs and ceremonies which were engendered by the instinct of profit and loss but were based on superstition and fear. Those primordial beliefs can rightly be called as the beginning of religion. Undoubtedly, the originating beliefs and doctrines were different in every region. But the cause of their genesis and the need of adopting them was similar. Afterwards, as the time rolled on, man came out of the stage of savagery. He passed through different stages such as nomadic, agricultural, commercial and industrial. Then he entered the scientific stage. His original and former beliefs as well as customs went on changing along with addition in his knowledge and experience.

All the great religions of the present times such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam were born five thousand years ago. Even before these religions, there had been religious beliefs and ceremonies. This is the reason that investigations show that all the present religions appear to be based on the religious beliefs, customs and prayers, laws of ancient times. The above-named four religions are called major because their followers are in millions and they are spread over various parts of the world.

It cannot be denied that these major religions made big changes and additions to the beliefs and customs of their predecessors. But these 'big changes' are confined to the limited thinking e.g. conception of God and life after death, etc. In addition to the changes in these concepts, no change could be made. Superstitions, customs, social and moral laws were either kept intact or superficial changes were made in them. This state of affairs leads to the result that the founders of great religions knew very well about the psychology of the people and had reached the conclusion that their love for convention, ignorance and backwardness would not allow them to be responsive to novel changes. Therefore, they refrained from radical changes in customs and superstitions.

This is the condition of almost all the great religions. Even many of the beliefs and laws of Islam are borrowed from ancient tribal beliefs and laws. Some of the Islamic beliefs and laws resemble with the beliefs and laws of other world religions. Some of these laws existed not only during the savage Arab period, but even during the primitive stage of man. Most of the customs and concepts have become so out-dated that they have no use in the present time, nor do they satisfy an informed and rational mind. There is no need of continuing any one of them because they appear to be ridiculously useless in modern times.

For example, according to the Islamic interpretation of the exploiters and opportunists, the following beliefs are regarded as the pillars of the edifice of Islam:

1. Belief in a Personal God.
2. Belief in creation of man, life after death, purgatory, Day of Judgement, Dooms Day, Paradise and Hell etc.
3. Circumbulation of Ka'ba on the eve of Haj, stoning the three devils at Mana, running which is called 'Sae'.
4. Animal sacrifice.
5. Circumcision.
6. Regarding some animals as propitious or ominous and some as lawful or unlawful.
7. Making of offerings for the soul of the dead.
8. The use of incantations and charms etc., for the solution of material problems.
9. Offering of prayers on the graves and expressing one's desires.
10. Prayers and vigils.

Because, in the above lines, I have called some of these beliefs and customs as borrowings from the pagan Arabs

and also from the superstitions and ceremonies of the primitive ages, I consider it my duty to give some arguments in favour of my opinion.

1. Concept of a Personal God

Man needs invoking to some greater force for redressal when he finds him in a state of helplessness, trouble, fear and illness. It was for this reason that, from the very beginning, he started believing in such powers whom he could approach in exigencies for his psychological satisfaction. Researches prove that for the psychological satisfaction, he sometimes worshipped animals like a lion or a snake; and during some phase of his evolution, he bowed down before the sun, the fire, the river and other objects, treating them as gods. Genii, ghosts and other supernatural elements were no exception either. Getting along this way, the psychology of man inclined towards human worship. Numerous historical evidences clearly purport that there was a time when the magicians, reformers and kings were worshipped as gods. Idol-worship originated therefrom.

The idol-breaking religions of later ages regarded the wooden and stone images as superstitions, but could not get rid of the personal or physical concept of God. They conceived God sitting in some form or other on the skies, creating and destroying creatures, distributing food to and snatching it from people, noting their actions and giving them reward and punishment. Hence they began worshipping and praising Him.

In a verse of the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, it has been described "God made man in His own image". There is also an Arabic saying "Allah made man in His own

shape". This concept of personal God is revealed from the 'Islamic belief' of the opportunists according to which God is on the seventh canopy of Heaven, seated on a throne. He has hands, feet, eyes, ears, face and body. He is the Creator of the universe, Distributor of food to the creation, Master of reward and punishment, Destroyer and Preserver. The last Prophet, Mohammed, met him on the seventh heaven on the eve of his Ascent. On the Day of Judgement, He will descend to earth and sit on it, measure the actions of men in a balance according to which they will be sent to Heaven or Hell. Noted commentators of Islam such as Imam Malik bin Uns, Imam Ahmed bin Hambal, Imam Daud bin Ali, Imam Abu Timya, Imam Abu Qayyum, Ibne Haitham, Allama Shaukani and many others have the same belief. (See: *The Religion of Islam* by Mohd. Abdul Ghani).

References can be made in support of this belief from the Quranic verses and the traditions of the Prophet. Some of them are given as under:

1. God is seated on the roof of skies.
2. When God came, the angels came in rows with Him.
3. When, in the night of Ascent, Mohammed approached God, He came down and, between them, there was the distance of two bows or even less.
4. The hand of God was on his hand.
5. The radiant and blessed face of God will remain.
6. The day when the thigh of God will be unveiled.

From some well-known sayings of the Prophet, the bodily concept of God is manifest:

In Bokhari and Muslim, Abu Huraira related:

1. *"On the Doomsday, the fire of Hell will not subside until God has thrust His leg into it so as to make it extinguished"*.

2. *"Our God descends from earth to sky each night".*

In Bokhari and Muslim, the books on the traditions of the Holy Prophet, it is related by Abdullah bin Masood:

"On the Doomsday, God will put all the skies on one finger and earth on the other".

Hence, these references prove that the majority of Muslims believe in the bodily or personal concept of God. No doubt, ever since the time the Muslim philosophers and Sufis have refuted this idea, some of the religious scholars too have appeared to share this belief. But, among the Muslims, there is no dearth of people who attribute such human qualities to God such as seeing or hearing, being pleased or displeased etc. There are also a few religious scholars who denounce all those who do not believe in the personal attributes of God. But such concepts do not lend force to either greatness or universality of Islam.

2. The Concepts of Creation of Man, Life After Death, Doomsday, Heaven and Hell etc

About these matters too, the things insisted upon by the opportunists are based on old superstitions. They believe that, on the Day of Creation, when God said "Be", the whole universe came into existence at once. Along with it, the spirits also came into being. From the spirits, God enquired if they recognised Him. They replied in the affirmative. Ever since that time, the spirits have been living in their abode. According to the allotted time, some of them come and inhabit the bodies of men and then go into purgatory where they will live till Doomsday. The spirits in purgatory wander about here and there as in the world. Sometimes they visit the earth to see their relatives. The offering of food and cloth etc. reaches them.

When will the Doomsday occur? There is no clear date fixed for it. But some of the indications of the Doomsday are that people will leave villages and go to cities. Before the occurrence of that day, an angel will blow a trumpet, the noise of which will break the earth into pieces; the mountains will melt and appear like balls of cotton, the earth will become even, then rains and rivers will flood it; spirits will come back to their bodies; all men, like insects, will cover the surface of the earth. The sun will come as down as the height of one and a quarter spear; all mankind, along with its prophets, will get lost in uncertainty; all will have to pass through a bridge passage. Those who have made sacrifices or have got mosques built, will pass it easily, the sinners will not be able to cross this bridge and will be cut down. On the other side of the bridge, in a vast plain, God will be sitting on a throne with a balance before Him to weigh the sins of every man. The man with greater amount of sins will be deported to Hell, while that with more virtues will be sent to Heaven.

About the Paradise, it is said that there will be palaces of silver, gold and gems, lovely gardens in which canals of milk and honey will flow. To serve the dwellers of Paradise, there will be houris, and handsome male attendants. In contrast with the beauty of Paradise, Hell has been painted as extremely horrible. It is said that it is all fire. The condemned ones will be tortured in Hell in various ways and they will be consumed to fire there.

Except Muslims, all other men practising different religions will be thrown into Hell; of the seventy-three sects of Muslims, seventy-two will also go to Hell, only one sect will reach Paradise. Just as the majority of men face hardships in this world and a few capitalists as well as land-owners roll into luxuries; similarly, a large number of the sufferers will be in Hell and some comforted ones in Heaven.

Two Interpretations of Islam

These beliefs are the very edifice of the interpretation of Islam of the exploiters and opportunists. They have painted God as such a ruthless and cruel tyrant that He will chastise the whole human race merely because that it does not follow the ridiculous preachings of the opportunists. According to their interpretation, God, the Nourisher and the Sustainer of the entire mankind, turns out to be the agent of a sect of the Muslims in life Hereafter.

The study of history tells us that many of such beliefs are borrowed from primitive religions and superstitions. Inside the pyramids of Egypt which have dated before the existence of Judaism and Christianity, there exist such carvings and statues which point out the primitiveness of such beliefs. Old mythologies too tell about the ideas of this kind. In view of these realities, I do not understand how these beliefs can help in proving that Islam is either a natural religion or it is the only religion of the world guaranteeing salvation.

3. Circumbulation of Ka'ba, Stoning of Satan and Kissing of Stone, etc

Most of the ceremonies were common among the pagan Arabs and some of them existed even before Abraham. The square building of the Kaaba is said to be the ancient temple of the Arabs which was later replenished and sanctified by Abraham as well as Ismahil so as to convert it into a place of worship. It is said about the black stone that it was the stone of an ancient temple. Some researchers also believe that it was the sign of one of the ancient gods called "Zohra" which was placed in a corner, inspite of the purification of the old temple. At a fixed time, people used to go there on yearly pilgrimage and it was a well-known temple. Very like the ancient customs of worship of the sun-god, it was circumbulated even at that time.

About the custom of throwing stones on the devils, it is said that it is a mark of hatred and protest against the gods disliked by the ancient Arabs and this practice has been in vogue ever since the days of paganism. About the custom of running between Safa and Marwa, it is said that Hajra, the Egyptian wife of Abraham, was left there all alone and there she gave birth to Ismahil. Perturbed as she was, she ran to and fro in search of water. Hence, by the grace of God, a spring of water gushed out on that spot. The ceremony of running is performed to commemorate the restlessness of Hajra.

In these rituals, there appears to be no utility or significance except that they are old conventions. They cannot therefore be deemed as obligations. In order to prove Islam as a complete code of life, the last and the final religion which guarantees salvation of the entire mankind, emphasis on these ceremonies and rituals should be deemed as necessary.

4. Sacrifice of Animals

The Quran tells us that Abraham had a dream in which God asked him to offer the sacrifice of his son. On being awake, under the divine injunction, he tried to slaughter Ismahil. But the angels saved the boy and placed a ram instead. The tradition of sacrifice originated from that event. The Bible too relates this incident but, instead of Ismahil, it gives the name of Isaac. However, in both the Holy Books, the cause of sacrifice has been mentioned as the order of God.

The study of ancient religions reveals that the custom of sacrificing animals had been existing thousands of years earlier than Abraham. As a matter of fact, animal sacrifice existed in almost all the ancient religions. Historical research

tells that this custom is one of the superstitions of the primitive days. The sacrifice was offered and a man from the tribe was slaughtered so as to appease the anger of gods or to propitiate them. In those days, God was thought to be such a ferocious being who did not feel satisfied without human blood.

Abraham's concept of God was analogous to this old belief. Therefore, in order to seek the favour of God, he got ready for his son's sacrifice. In the eighteenth chapter of the Book of Genesis, it is written that, at Mamra, Abraham beheld God along with two angels. It was noon. He welcomed all the three, entreated Him for their stay, washed their feet and feasted them with the beef of a robust calf. After the feast, God communicated to him the tidings that his wife, Sarah, would bear him a son. Both of them had considerably advanced in age, so much so that Sarah had ceased to have menses. But this prayer yielded them a child whom they named as Isaac. At that time, Abraham was hundred years old and Sarah was ninety. Thus, it becomes evident what idea Abraham formed of God, but it was in keeping with the idea of his age.

In those days, God was reckoned as a tyrannical force who was fond of human flesh and blood. The concept of a Merciful and Compassionate God is a much later product. One is at a loss to understand as to why in the world of today, the ritual of sacrifice occupies a significant position in Islam and it is claimed that Islam is a religion suited not only to human nature, but at the same time, it is superior to other religions.

5. Circumcision

Some people call this ritual as that of 'Islamising' but the fact is that this practice had existed long before the advent of Islam and it is practised by the Jews as well. It began with

Abraham. In the seventeenth chapter of the Book of Genesis, it is related that God appeared before Abraham when he was ninety-nine years old and thus quoth He: *"I promise to grant thee a son who will be the father of kings. They will worship me as God. Therefore, I wish thee to get circumcised and direct thy descendents to get circumcised"*. Hence, Abraham got himself circumcised and his son, Ismahil, too. Ismahil was then thirteen years old. The Muslims and the Jews allowed this ritual in their religions as a tradition of Abraham.

Recent researches have shown that the ritual of circumcision did exist among the savages of the primitive ages. The ancient tribes of Australia, New Zealand, Africa and America practised it too and they had no concern with Abraham.

The worship of the "male organ of god Shiv" in India and the worship of "phallus" in Greece and in other regions clearly indicate that this ritual is in some way or other related to the concept which was prevalent before the age of Abraham. However, to consider this ritual of the primitive age as a religious duty of Islam and to regard it as a great blessing in this world as well as a source of salvation for the world Hereafter, is nothing but strange.

6. Regarding of Animals as Clean or Unclean

To regard some animals as clean and some as unclean, is an essential religious requirement of the Muslims. The dog and the swine are considered as utterly unclean. Even the Jews regard these two animals so. But the concept of propitious and ominous animals is neither the discovery of the Jews nor of the Muslims, it existed among the Semitic Arabs much earlier than the advent of the two religions.

The roots of this concept are linked with that period

of savagery and superstition of man when he lived in forests and, being extremely superstitious, inferred omen from everything. In the morning, when he went out in search of food, his effort was to protect himself from beasts and calamities. His urge for seeking food was the dominant factor. To different things, he regarded as signs of his success or failure. In this connection, familiar animals and birds, and the chirp and movements of those birds and animals were good or bad omens for him. At the start of his errand, if he came across such an animal which, according to his experience or the experience of his ancestors, was considered as a harbinger of success, it was regarded as propitious. But if the animal was contrary to it, then it was thought ominous. To this practice of treating animals as good or bad by the primitive man, the anthropologists have defined them by the terms of 'totem' and 'taboo'. On the basis of this superstition later on, many tribes made images of these propitious animals, keeping those images with them so that they could dart a glance at them each morning or at the start of their errand. Afterwards, worship of these favourite animals began. Similarly, ways were adopted for killing the ominous animals or avoiding their baneful influence. The worship of animals such as lion, elephant, cow, snake, crocodile and eagle etc., is still being made in different tribes for this very reason. The name of some tribes and their individuals are given after their favourite animals and very many people find different omens even today from animals such as cat and fox.

Research about loathing the swine shows that, thousands of years ago, natives of Frigia and Lydia in Asia Minor worshipped Aetius and his wife, who were god and goddess. In their mythological tales, it was related that the boar killed the god when he went for the hunt. Therefore, for this reason, the worshippers of that god regarded this animal as a taboo. The people of that region were Semites. The

following generations of the Semites, very like their ancestors, maintained the same hatred for the animals. As the Jews and the Muslims hail from the Semetic race, therefore they adopted the notion. (For further details, see *Golden Bough* by John Frazer).

As a matter of fact, the swine had become so loathsome among the Arabs, and its hatred had been so deeply rooted in the Arab tradition, that Islam too could not negate it. On the other hand, Islam confirmed it by declaring it unlawful. But it is a proven fact that this was neither originated by Islam nor has it such a religious significance so as to be regarded as a fundamental tenet of Islam.

7. Offerings and Requiems for the Dead

I have already told that among the old beliefs accepted by Islam, one is that, after death, the spirit of man will stay in purgatory till the Doomsday. There it roams about, eats, drinks and fulfils its needs in the same way as in this world. Hence, it is incumbent upon the descendants of the dead to arrange for his food and clothes. It is said that offerings of food and clothes made in the name of the dead, benefit the dead in the purgatory. With the same beliefs, certain ceremonies such as Soyem (the third day of the demise) and Chehlum (the fortieth day of the demise) are held. During this period, recitation of Quran is made for eternal peace of the soul of the dead. Requiems are made and food is offered to the needy and the destitute. At the same time, cloth is distributed among the priests, the poor and the beggars. There also exists a belief that the soul of the dead comes back to his house and when it notices certain ceremonies being made for his redemption from sins, it gets pleased. In the contrary case, it gets annoyed and returns cursing its survivors.

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If we seriously study these ceremonies or beliefs, we shall know that these were not the innovations of Islam but had been existing since the primitive times. The excavations of old tombs revealed that, in the primitive days, the belief was common that the dead continued to have needs as they had in life. The articles discovered from the Pyramids of Egypt evidenced that the same belief of ancient people led to bury with the dead edibles, cosmetics, arms and carriage etc. At places, attendants and wives of the dead were also buried alive so that they could serve the dead in the usual way. Once upon a time, this custom was common in China. When Chingez Khan, the Great Mongol, died, his wives were also buried with him along with other articles. The custom of Satti among the Hindus in India was of the same nature too. To cut short, there has been a homogeneity in the beliefs and ideas among the people of different religions and regions. The Muslims too continued to follow the old beliefs but in a different form. They held the ceremonies of distributing food and clothes, of performing recital of Quran and requiem. The Hindu ceremonies of "Chaintha" and "Paat" are various shapes of this concept.

It is strange that it is said by the Muslims that everyone will be rewarded or punished according to his actions. But, on the other hand, it is also claimed that the alms and offerings made for the dead, absolve him of sin and pave way for his salvation. If this belief is given weight, personal acts have then no importance. This concept gives unbridled freedom to the wealthy people who may commit the worst of sins but earn atonement by providing food to a few priests and beggars. Thus, their inheritors will save them from the punishment to be meted out on the Day of Judgement. Such a belief in no way presents the picture of such a religion which may be deemed as the final and the only religion or whose followers be regarded as the best people.

8. Prayers, Charms and Incantations, etc

For overcoming economic stringencies, belief in prayers, charms and incantations is also reckoned as Islamic. Many books have been written on this subject and, in support of this belief, references are made from the Quran and the traditions. Beyond doubt, due to Wahabi teachings and also because of the modern forces, many people have given up these practices. But a large number of men are still clinging to these beliefs. The means of livelihood and the sources of income of the majority of so-called priests and occultists are through charms and incantations.

In fact, these beliefs are also pre-Islamic and are reminiscences of the primitive age. The difference is that, in the primitive age, magical incantations were uttered so as to achieve the desired effect. Today, the holy verses of the Quran and the names of God are recited. In the magical charms, impressions of other type were made, now figures are marked according to the Arabic alphabets. The names of the Quranic verses or of angels are also written. The custom of incense-burning or taking the sacrificial animal or thing around the patient, is nothing but the primitive practice.

Whatever might have been the importance of such superstitions in the past, they are not only useless but ridiculous in the present day world. If magical charms, incantations and reciting of verses are regarded as the inseparable part of the Islamic faith so as to achieve the worldly objectives, then despite this claim that Islam is the final and the only religion of world, the Muslims can for ever remain subservient to others for the fulfilment of their needs and can never attain high status or glory. This belief obstructs the struggle of life and leads to escape.

9. Offering Prayers and Requiems on Tombs

Visiting the graves of relatives or of saints and offering requiems and sweets is a common practice among the Muslims. About what happens in the grave, it is believed that after the dead person is buried, two angels named Munkir and Nakir enter it, and having made the dead alive again, they put to him some questions, such as: Who is thy God? What is the name of thy Prophet? What is thy religion? This is the reason that every Muslim is made to recite Kalima when death appears to get hold over him. After the burial, such words as "Allah is my God", "Mohammed is my Prophet" and "Islam is my religion" are scribbled over his grave so as to enable him to answer Munkir and Nakir.

Such beliefs about the dead people are really ramifications of the beliefs of the primitive days by which the dead were supposed to be participating in world affairs. They were worshipped and were supposed to be protectors and helpers of the living. We come to know the full facts about these beliefs from the accounts of the primitive of Australia, New Zealand, America and Africa. In Japan, the dead relatives are still worshipped. In Egypt, China and Central Asia, the dead were buried after mumification. The general faith was that, even after death, the body and soul remained one and if the body was preserved, the dead would have no difficulty in rising on the Day of Judgement. Along with the shroud, some instructions for the dead were also written on "papyrus". In some sects of Islam, the custom of writing on the shroud some verses and "contract" and burying with the dead, is a reminiscence of the same ceremony. Inscription of verses on the graves is considered good among all the sects of Islam. The visit to the graves of saints, to entreat, to place wreath or covering, to get the head tonsured, to use

myrtle, to beat drum or blow conch are various shapes of ancient customs. To claim some of these ceremonies as Islamic, is to negate the greatness of Islam.

10. Prayers and Exercises

According to the interpretation of the opportunists, prayer is the fundamental worship and fast is a compulsory exercise. These two are regarded within the five fundamental tenets of Islam. So much stress is laid on the performance of these tenets and these are considered such a vital part of Islam that their importance is reduced to being ephemeral and ceremonial. Most of the people have been believing that prayer and fasting are the very objectives unto themselves and their rules have no other aim except bowing and prostration. Similarly, fasting is confined to its mere observance within the prescribed time. In the name of Islam, whatever have been the anti-Islamic activities of the Muslims till the present day, such a belief has given them satisfaction. After offering prayer and observing fast, they consider all their wishes and whims in accordance with Islam, howsoever the wishes and whims be outrageous or criminal. It is as if the sheer observance of these tenets did not ennoble individual or collective conduct, but the self-confidence and satisfaction of heart as engendered by the observance of their tenets, let loose cravings and personal desires.

From the analysis as presented above, it becomes evident that the beliefs or ceremonies which the opportunists have considered as the soul of religion, are reminiscences of ancient traditions which serve neither any lofty purpose of this world nor of the world Hereafter. Further, these beliefs and ceremonies have no utility on the basis of which Islam may be considered either superior to other religions

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or the last and final religious heirarchy.

In fact, such beliefs and ceremonies have conventional value and the same law of evolution is applicable here under which man has evolved through different stages. Human intelligence, knowledge, customs, beliefs and codes of life have been progressing along with experiments and social changes. Therefore, in moral and social codes, in religious beliefs and rituals, changes are sure to occur in future according to the needs and demands of time. Therefore, to regard temporary ceremonies and beliefs as unchangeable and eternal, is contrary to the law of evolution. To confine things to the conventional beliefs whose beginning and end are not fully known, is not only ignorance of the law of Nature (evolution) but a proof of the lack of intelligence. To regard the conventional beliefs as real Islam, is a well thought-out plan of the opportunists so that they may retain their hold on the Muslim masses and people be kept involved in such petty affairs and their exploitation may continue. For their selfish motives, the opportunists have the least care if they are damaging or causing harm to Islam.

Beyond doubt, Islam can be called a world religion. It is because its followers number into millions and are existing in almost every part of the world. By this definition, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Communism can also be called world religions. But, by calling Islam a world religion, if it is meant that the welfare of the whole world depends on its acceptance, especially, on the interpretation of Islam as made by the opportunists, it is not only self-deception but an affront on the real teachings of Islam.

Whatever I have described in the previous pages amounts to it that, in the beginning, the purpose of all religions was the same i.e. peace, progress and unity of mankind. Thus, the beliefs and rituals in all religions were almost identical. But as regional needs, vested interests and environment demanded for changes, the outward appearance and con-

tours of religions changed. In the opinion of truth-lovers, these changes occurred only in such beliefs and rituals which had been purely exhibitivite and which were practised by the illiterate people and the lovers of conventions. These beliefs and rituals have never had any value for the truth-lovers. The real objective and common ideals of religions have always been before them. They have full faith in the abiding truth and eternity of religions.

The following verses of the Quran are clearly opposed to the narrow interpretation of Islam which is made by the opportunists. These verses confirm the point of view of the truth-lovers:

1. Addressing the Holy Prophet in this verse, it was revealed:

يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ

"Believers are they who believe in what was revealed unto you and in what was given to those before you". It means that, in the eyes of God, a true Muslim is that who does not differentiate between the books and teachings of previous prophets and the teachings of the Holy Quran. Had there been any difference among them, there would have been no emphasis on believing in them.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلُوا صَالِحًا لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ
يَحْزَنُونَ ۝

2. *"Among the Muslims, Jews, Christians and followers of other religions those who believe in God, the Day of Judgement and perform good deeds, they shall reap the reward and attain salvation".*

By reposing faith in God, it is meant that there be faith that the universe is created under a plan and God is its Creator-cum-Administrator. Similarly, by reposing faith in the Day of Judgement, it is meant that there be faith in the evolution and good future of man. By good deeds, it is meant that all efforts be made for the progress, peace and unity of mankind.

أَمَّنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ
وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نَفَرٌ بَيْنَ بَيْنٍ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ

3. It means that "Prophet Mohammad and true Muslims believe in what was given to them by God. All of them believe in God, His angels, His Books and the veracity of His prophets. They know that there is no difference and contradiction in the teachings of all of His prophets". From this verse, this truth becomes evidently clear that in the background of different prophets and books, the Oneness of God has remained the same, and thus, it is essential to repose faith in the evolution of religions. So, it becomes clear and crystal that, unlike the claim of the opportunists, Islam cannot be regarded as a negation or contradiction of other religions. If it is thought so, it will be contrary to the spirit of Islam.

THE SECOND CLAIM OF OPPORTUNISTS

The second claim of the opportunists is that their interpretation of Islam has the solution of all the problems of human race and it is a complete philosophy of life. Before exposing the reality of this claim, I think it necessary to answer two important questions:

- a) What are the problems of human race which are solved through Islam?
- b) What complete philosophy of life is presented by Islam?

The Problems of Human Race

These are of two kinds: fundamental problems, temporary problems.

Fundamental Problems

For the men of every age and region, the fundamental problems of hatred, feud, disaffection, ignorance, superstition, poverty and hunger etc., have been existing. If it is claimed that Islam can provide a remedy for these problems, then the interpretation of the opportunists does not at all present any solution. The correct solution can, of course, be found in the interpretations of the truth-lovers and the Muslim mystics. The interpretation of the opportunists, on the other hand, not only gives birth to very many problems but complicates them. Not only among other men but even among the Muslims, the interpretation of the opportunists fans the flame of hatred and discord, thus sowing the seeds of rigid sectarianism. The so-called priests spare no time in vindicating these explanations because they get paid from the funds of these opportunists. Therefore, in return for the money of the opportunists, the Muslim priests create an atmosphere against the believers of their faith which is charged with hatred and animosity. They also incite their co-religionists to take recourse to violence and assault their opportunists, promising Heaven in life Hereafter for this crusade. Emphasising upon their

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dogmatic faith and exhibitivite rituals, they proscribe people in the name of God and the Prophet to adopt a rational and healthy outlook. They make utmost use of all the inventions of the West in their daily life, but keep on denouncing all the sciences which have gone into shaping out these inventions. Thus, they decree against the study of these sciences for the Muslims. Therefore, a question arises as to how the Islam interpreted by such unscrupulous people can meet the challenge of remedying the ills of all the Muslims and of the whole human race except serving the vested interests of the so-called Muslim priests and their masters. Further, in order to conceal their ignorance, the opportunists claim that their Islam alone can prove to be the panacea when the whole humanity has come to its fold. It is as if problems cannot be solved without all human beings embracing Islam, even if all the mankind gets annihilated.

In the changing conditions, new problems will continue to crop up in every country and at each time. For the solution of these problems, a rational approach in consonance with the urges of time will have to be made. To prescribe one and the same medicine for all the diseases, will amount to ignorance or self-deception. Take, for example, the problem of poverty. In the Islam of the opportunists, there exists no other solution except extorting money in the name of Zakat (cess), alms and abolishing of interest; although today's economics has no relationship with the economics of Islam. Similarly, there is a hell of difference between the social life of today and that day. A detailed discussion will be made in the following chapters. In these lines, I wish to say that all those men who, ignoring the urges of the present times, regard Islam as a solution for all the ills and problems and thus affirm the interpretation of the opportunists, they either deliberately try to hoodwink people or suffer from the jaundiced eyes. As such, their vision is

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completely blurred. A critical study shows that the interpretation of Islam made by the self-seekers gives birth to a special theory and that theory:

- a) Throttles democracy and paves way for dictatorship.
- b) Creates hatred and ill-feeling among men in the name of religion and sect.
- c) Impedes rational and scientific enquiry on the basis of supernatural or metaphysical elements.
- d) Pollutes the peaceful atmosphere and induces co-religionists for waging a war against the people with different beliefs.
- e) Advocates for the right of retaining private property, thus obstructing such plan through which poverty of general masses can be removed.
- f) Distracts the attention of men from the real issues of life, thus regarding the beliefs and rituals of the primitive days as the only true religion.
- g) Evokes fascist tendencies in the Muslims, misguiding them to deem that they are the chosen creatures of God or superior beings to rule the world.
- h) Lays all stress on sheer formalism and ceremonies, making the followers deviate from the cardinal principles of Islam.
- i) Strengthens the tendency of conventionalism, completely losing sight of the demands of the law of evolution.
- j) Negates the feeling of brotherhood and of human dignity, creating simultaneously an atmosphere which is charged with the feeling of discord and hatred.

Secondary Problems

These problems vary and are caused by regional and

geographical conditions. For instance, difficulties and problems of the cold countries are different from those of the hot ones. The days and nights in the regions adjoining the Poles are fairly long and considerably short in the moving satellites. In these conditions, the fixed duration of twelve and fourteen hours cannot be deemed as practicable. For example, it will be difficult to observe five-time prayers and one-month fast in a region where, for twenty-four hours or more, the sun neither rises nor sets. As regards the satellites, it will be all the more interesting because their days and nights are of half an hour of duration. How can three prayers of the day and two prayers of night be performed within half an hour and what will be the importance of fasting for half an hour? This proves that problems change according to time, space and other conditions. Therefore, their solution be also different. A single principle or formula cannot work for all regions.

The same holds good with regard to the cultural conditions in other regions and at different stages. The conditions and demands of the primitive man were different. He lived scattered in the trunks and hollows of trees. He took shelter in the caves. He lived all naked. At that stage he was ignorant of fire, weapons, instruments and modes of cultivation. His daily search for food, safety from wild animals, helplessness against natural calamities, lack of permanent abode and means of subsistence had compelled him to pass each moment of his life in the agony of perpetual fear and superstition. To suit these conditions and to satisfy his inner self, he innovated certain beliefs and rituals. After that stage, developing gradually, man entered the bedouin phase of his evolution. During that period, he started rearing the animals so as to get milk and meat. This venture led him to the pursuit of new pastures. He was also exposed to certain new challenges and clash of interests. For the solution of his problems, man adopted the tribal pattern of collective

life. But the problems of this stage of development were most certainly different from the problems of the primitive age. With the passage of time, he got disgusted with that kind of nomadic life too and started his permanent habitation at the bank of the rivers. During that period, he made himself acquainted with the system of cultivation, started living in small groups and built cottages for his dwelling. In those days, cutting of forests, bringing virgin land under the plough, garnering grain, braving the weatheric conditions and for protection of his village, he had to evolve different ways and means from his bedouin life. Afterwards, the human society passed through other stages such as commercial, technical and scientific. Now a question arises; will the problems of the present stage of evolution not be different from that of the agricultural stage? Further, for the solution of the present-day problems, will not new demands and urges be given due consideration?

But, inspite of it, it is claimed that the opportunists' interpretation of Islam with all its rituals is the solution of the problems of every age. It is nothing except ignorance and self-deception. The problems of life have ever been changing under the exigencies of time and will continue to change in future as well. The laws framed thirteen hundred years ago for solving the problems of that time cannot be applied to the problems of today or that of tomorrow: such an insistence would be against the eternal dignity of Islam. Just as the cure for every disease is according to the nature of the malady and the condition of the patient, so is the solution of a problem which is made in accordance with the needs and demands of time. To eke out a solution for the problems of all times and all regions, is the very negation of the limitless variety of Nature.

In this connection, much hue and cry is made in the name of Shariat and Sunnah. Although many such things are revealed from the words and deeds of the Holy Prophet

(p.b.u.h.), which prove that, in the domain of wordly affairs and conventional beliefs, he liked people to think and act according to their power of intellect, comprehension and experience.

For instance, somebody once asked him about the Day of Judgement. He frankly answered "I don't know". But if you ask a Muslim priest the same question, he will arrogantly and authoritatively give such details of the old mythological belief as if he has personally witnessed it. Notwithstanding the fact that the whole of his tale will prove to be baseless, if judged in the light of reason. In fact, by the Day of Judgement is meant a happy future for man and for this world. This meaning is not my own interpretation, but it was given by Shaikh-ul Akbar Mohiuddin Ibne Arbi, a great scholar, researcher and philosopher of the Muslim world. He says:

'The term called 'the life to come' is in a process of perpetual happening. The world is neither to come to an end completely nor is determined its limit. The Dooms Day is ever-continuing. This world and life Hereafter are only the different names of the new manifestations appearing under the forces of time and space. There are reflections of the changed shapes. One shape disappears, another comes into being. This change will continue for ever. Today is the Dooms Day for yesterday; and for today, it will be tomorrow'.

From the answer as given by the Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.), it is proved that, regarding this traditional belief, he did not wish to prophesise on his behalf and therefore left it to the understanding of people. In the same way, there is another narrative that once the Messenger of God happened to pass through a date orchard. At that time, the grove-keepers were busy in cross-fertilizing the date trees. The Holy Prophet forbade them to do so and further said, "*Nature will itself perform this task*". The grove-keepers obeyed

"In future you cross-fertilize the dates according to your wish and experience. My job is prophethood. It suits me not to interfere in every affair".

This instance makes it abundantly clear that he gave due weight to the opinion of the experts in their related fields and he allowed them the fullest freedom so as to express their opinion.

It is an open secret that the Prophet of Islam performed his duty in the dual capacity; as a political and social administrator, as a prophet of God. This is the reason that he made two different pronouncements about himself. When he discharged his duties as an administrator, he said, *"Verily, I am a human being like you"*. Having uttered this sentence, he rather made a confession that acts of human virtue and otherwise could be committed by him. Therefore, in this capacity, he regarded himself a creature of God, and like every common man. He therefore prayed God to keep away from falterings and transgressions. In other capacity, he claimed to be very close to the Providence and the Ascent confirmed his exalted position. In the latter capacity, he was "Ahmad" without the letter "m"* and "the city of knowledge" too. Therefore, to confuse the two positions is a distortion of reality.

This distinction makes it clear that the injunctions made by the Holy Prophet or as revealed in the Book regarding the permanent or temporary problems or the social conditions of that age, are not of lasting nature. After the social condition had changed, therefore the utility associated with those injunctions lost their value. To regard them as binding for all ages and conditions, is against the spirit of Islam, and law of Nature and the will of the Prophet.

So as to further expose the drawbacks of the interpretation of Islam as made by the self-seekers and opportunists,

* Without the letter "m", the word "Ahmad" is to be spelt as 'Ahad' which means 'Unique'. Ahad is one of the attributes of God.

it will be better to judge them in the light of the problems of our own times. Let us see if a correct solution of the problem lies with them. In my opinion, the following are the main problems in the present-day world which have caused a lot of chaos and confusion:

- a) Despotism or dictatorship
- b) Poverty
- c) Vested class interests
- d) Force and violence

a) Despotism or Dictatorship

Of all the systems that mankind has experienced, the despotic system has proved most horrible and baneful. With the increase in the deadliest weapons in the modern world, the probability of a colossal devastation is drawing nearer at an accelerated pace. As all the nations of the world are joining the conflicting super-powers, so is the tendency of despotism gaining ground. This dangerous tendency can be overcome by the feeling of brotherhood, the spirit of toleration and respect for human freedom and dignity as a whole. Can these virtues be inculcated in the followers of such a faith which is made to be based on prejudice, narrow-mindedness and extremism?

Despotism is that by which a group belonging to a certain race, creed, colour, political or religious belief may impose its ideology on others, acclaiming that ideology as the only remedy for the well-being of the whole human race. At the same time, it may reject or regard inferior the arguments and experiences of others, coercing them to accept its ideology. None should be allowed the right to dissent nor should his command. But that year, the date trees did not fruitify much. When the Prophet was told about it, he said:

any argument be entertained, howsoever convincing it may be. A particular person or group may assume power or leadership and others are forced to blindly follow.

Now cast a cursory glance at the opportunists, their preachings, their feelings and the mode of their behaviour in the light of it. Don't they discard all other ideologies and beliefs, only upholding their own ideology and faith as legitimate? Don't they create an atmosphere charged with religious frenzy only to intimidate and cow down their adversaries? Haven't they monopolised Islam, the interpretation of the Quran and the exegesis by force? There will be no other answer to each such question except in affirmation. This leads to prove that the ideology, faith, feeling and mode of behaviour of the opportunists are governed by despotic tendencies.

According to the real teachings of Islam, dictatorship is not only an evil of the worst type but it is also most detrimental to the collective life of a nation. As far as the Islamic teachings go, man is the vicegerent of God on earth and all human beings are linked with the bond of equality, fraternity and brotherhood. No doubt, administrative responsibilities can be different, but on account of them, none can be a permanent ruler and be entitled to any distinction or a special status. Similarly, none is a subject nor an inferior being for ever. This is the reason that the Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.), despite being the Apostle of God and the administrative head of the Muslim state, exhibited no crest of power with regard to his living, dress and dealing with people. He used to live like a commoner, he mixed with the common people and answered their questions with all politeness. He held respect for humanity so dear that he did not like even a bedouin to stand up as a mark of respect. Beyond doubt, he negated all such negative values which encouraged the distinction between man and man on the basis of colour, creed and caste. He taught the lesson of equality,

fraternity and humanism. The Prophet of Islam set mankind to the path of unity, progress and prosperity.

The Muslim mystics shed light on this very aspect of the Islamic teachings. But since the vested interests of the exploiters were jeopardised by the spread of this teaching, therefore, the exploiters hatched plots against them, regarded them as heretics and finally got them sentenced. The dictators of the present age too are inflicting punishment on all those who are raising the banner of liberalism. How true was Shah Waliullah when he said:

فَذَكِّ كُلِّ نَظَّامٍ

"Discard all the worthless systems and adopt new modes of life in the light of reason".

However, the interpretation of the opportunists has always been in favour of dictatorship. How can the commentary of the self-seekers be expected to shield people and their interests?

b) Poverty

In the present-day world, the problem of poverty which the largest segment of human society is suffering from, is of utmost importance. Barring aside other countries, if Pakistan is to be viewed, the largest number of its people are deprived of food, clothing, housing, medicine and job opportunities. They are denied of basic necessities of life. Only five per cent of the total population of the country is prosperous.

According to the interpretation of the opportunists, the solution lies in the abolition of interest and those who are in a position to give charity and Zakat be made to pay it. But a question arises: can charity and cess prove to be the

sufficient means by which poverty can be eliminated and the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter and medicine be provided to every citizen? The answer will be only a big "no".

This fact is fully evident that Zakat is levied on money, silver, gold and cattle-head. It is neither determined on property nor on income. . These days, none keeps cash in his house. People either keep their money in banks or invest it in business and industry. The banks advance the deposited money on loan to the business and industry. In the event of the abolition of interest, neither people will deposit money in banks nor will the banks be able to advance loan. As a result of it, investment will come to a halt. There will be a cessation of all commercial activities and the country will immeasurably suffer.

In the present times, two economic systems are in practice: capitalistic system and socialistic system. The capitalistic system exists in banks, industries and big private enterprises by virtue of which only a few prosper, but the majority of men get poor. In the socialistic system, the concept of private property does not exist. Production and means of production are controlled by the state. Therefore, the state becomes responsible for food, clothing and housing of the individuals. Islam negates both the systems. On the one hand, it is against the abolition of private property; on the other hand, by abolishing interest, it stresses on the realisation of 2½ per cent as Zakat and makes restrictions for its expenditure too.

As compared to the past, the machinery of the present-day government has assumed large proportions. For its operation and smooth functioning, large sums of money are needed. This money is acquired by way of taxation on different items. Taxes are imposed on the commodities directly or indirectly or through both the ways. If people pay different taxes and they are made to pay Zakat at 2.5 per cent of

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the principal amount each year, they will not only get overburdened, but the commercial activity will very likely collapse. Further, people will have to retreat to the primitive ages.

As far as charity is concerned, it cannot be accounted at all. It is purely a voluntary act. For its realisation, neither a rule can be framed nor can one be forced to part with it. However, it has become fully evident that the self-seekers and their interpreted Islam present no solid and practicable solution for the eradication of poverty which has in its grip the majority of the countrymen nor do these self-seekers possess the ability to solve their problems.

c) Class Interest

The third formidable problem which the world is presently confronted with, is the exploitation of a class with its vested interests. To this class belong the capitalists, the religious leaders fed on the charity and contribution of the capitalists, the imperialists and their agents. These people keep on endeavouring to get hold over the government in some way or other, leadership, wealth, production and its distribution. They try to make the most of these sources for their own benefit. As a result of it, the majority are not able to get rid of poverty and instability. In order to perpetuate their power, the exploiters try to thrive on the slogans of individual freedom and religion. The Russians and people in other countries got disgusted with religion and fraud in the name of individual freedom because these slogans delivered no good; on the other hand, these slogans shielded the interests of the exploiters. At the moment, Pakistan is the only country in the world where exploitation of religion is at its highest pitch. Efforts are being made to present the real Islam through its misinter-

pretation. Undue advantage is taken of the simplicity of people and their innate love for Islam. All-embracing is the slogan of Islam. Thus, to benefit the vested interests of a class, slogans are being raised for Islamic systems, Islamic constitution, Islamic education, Islamic leadership and Islamic society etc. Behind these emotion-charged slogans, religious and sectarian feelings are also fanned against those who are the well-wishers of the country and the people.

There is no denying the fact that the slogan of Islam did play its role in the genesis of Pakistan, but despite that Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, discarded theocracy and future role of religion in state affairs in his speech delivered in the Constituent Assembly on 11th August, 1948. After passing a score of years, religion is being revived today so as to demean and molest the Muslims. Hectic efforts are being made to run the country on religious lines. It is evident that, very like the past, the fruit of this slogan will go in future to the bureaucrats, industrialists, landlords, traders and those Muslim priests who are living on the crumbs of these industrialists and traders. Very true was Sachal Sarmast when he said:

جیسین منبر مسجد مناری وبران نہ تین

حال حقانی میان سچو، حاصل نہ تیوی!

"So long as the pulpits of mosques continue to misinterpret Islam, the real self of Islam shall continue to elude".

This analysis evidences that the self-seekers and their misinterpreted Islam are themselves the exponents of class conflict, loot and plunder. Further, they have no solution to redeem the world from the clutches of miseries.

d) Force and Violence

The fourth important problem of the present-day world is the use of force and violence. It is really a matter of grave concern for the whole world that instead of settling the disputes through arguments and mutual understanding, violent means are employed for their solution. So long as this tendency prevails, there will neither be internal harmony and peace within the countries nor will there be a guarantee of safety from the menace of atomic destruction. By his certain qualities, man is the best and the noblest of all the creation and, as compared to other animals, he is certainly far superior. But brutality is that vice which lowers him to the position of animals and at times, proves him much worse than animals. To compel someone to accede to one's words on the basis of brute force or terrorism is such a savage feeling for which there exists no place within the sphere of culture and refinement. The good men of every age have regarded this feeling as contemptible.

The entire past history of man is replete with grave and tragic events which were caused by this feeling. Today, man has advanced in almost every walk of life. He has, beyond doubt, attained control over the forces of Nature. Large and beautiful cities have sprung all over the globe, but the way human population is concentrated, the impulse of brute feeling or the use of force can prove thousand times more ruinous than the past.

The foundation of the two major religions of the world is laid on non-violence. One of them is the Hinduism and other is the Christianity. The high-caste Hindus do not use meat owing to their belief in non-violence. Their ancestors

used to say that animal-torture was nothing short of a sin. But history is a witness that their descendants, by resorting to violence, converted millions of men into untouchables. Mahatama Gandhi attained freedom for India through the weapon of non-violence, but in his free country and even today, the Hindus very often let loose the orgy of communal riots, thus shedding the blood of hundreds of innocent men and women.

For the Christians, the teaching of Jesus Christ was 'if somebody smites on thy right cheek, turn to him the other as well', meaning thereby that violence should not be retaliated with violence and that effort should be made to win the heart of the enemy through love, affection and good conduct. Millions of men in Europe, Canada, America and other parts of the world are the followers of Christ. Do they really subscribe to the teachings of Christ? Are they not the same people who have set up military bases all over the world and have subjugated more than half of the world? Are they not the same people who were responsible for the outbreak of two World Wars in which millions of innocent men were killed and seriously wounded? Is it not a fact that despite their admission of colossal devastations in the Wars and posing themselves as the champions of peace, they have neither discredited the theory of violence nor have discarded its use, and in spite of their reposing faith in the Charter of the United Nations, they are bent upon stockpiling the deadly weapons? In these circumstances, hope could be pinned only from Islam which is basically and essentially a religion of peace. But it is equally deplorable that the colour with which the opportunists have daubed Islam, has presented it as an advocate of violence. In this context, significant is the meaning of Jihad (holy war) as interpreted by the opportunists. In Islam, there exists no concept of an offensive war. It is always defensive. But unfortunately, the interpretation of the self-seekers

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gives the impression that, in Islam too, the use of force is not only justified but it is expedient as well. The Muslims have, as a result of this extremist belief, suffered a lot. But notwithstanding the glaring differences of the Muslim mystics, the Muslim rulers and the self-seekers have not desisted from the provocative publicity of this belief.

In Pakistan, the self-seekers are engrossed in grinding their own axes in the sacred name of Islam. To usurp the rights of the smaller provinces against the wishes of their people, to trample democracy, to divert the attention of people from the real issues of life, to deprive men of human rights, to fan the flame of religious and sectarian feelings so as to serve the vested interests of the rulers and a few bigoted obscurantists, to let loose the reign of terror in order to brow-beat the opponents, to raise the false and hollow slogan of religion, to impede new and progressive forces and to thwart all attempts of the saner element so as to create a truly egalitarian society are some of the achievements of this group. According to the creed of the mystics or the real spirit of Islam, such cruel acts are not only un-Islamic but unadulterated infidelity. Force and violence breed discord and disunity while Islam preaches love and peace. It regards coercion or force as sin.

So grossly unjust and impervious to reason are these misguided obscurantists that if a Muslim finds it hard to be in agreement with their brand or interpretation of Islam, they instantly condemn him as a renegade. This banishment from Islam is the only device which these opportunists have so far been able to discover. It means that Islam is not the order of God but it is a limited company and they are its directors and proprietors. Further, they enjoy every right to include anyone whom they wish.

People believing in the true ideology of Islam and the Muslim mystics have their faith in Jihad (holy war). But their faith is absolutely different from that of the opportu-

nists. Unlike the obscurantists, they do not believe in usurping the rights of the people and in crushing their opponents, but in controlling their self. They seek their enemy not outside their being but within their self. They deem selfishness, self-worship, violence, bigotry and hatred not only their own enemies but the enemies of Islam too. For a mystic, every man is a manifestation of divine virtues. He hates none, not even the lowliest and the most contemptible being.

According to the commentary of the obscurantists, religion is not a personal affair of man: the Muslim priests and the ruler are also assigned a role. This interpretation safeguards their interests. Consequently, the priests and the ruler start intervening in the political, social, economic and other affairs of people. As they try to measure all the affairs by the yard-stick of religion, they exploit men in the worst form, apart from making their lives most miserable.

The Western countries denounce the socialistic system on the plea that it makes no provision for human freedom and man has no more value than a gadget in a machine. But perhaps they do not know that in a Muslim society which is governed in the light of the interpretation of the self-seekers, the condition of a common man is far worse than that in the socialist system. In socialist states, individual freedom is restricted for the collective gain of the society. But in fake Islam, the same thing is done to serve the interests of a coterie of men. In a socialist country, the majority members of the Communist Party interpret the Marxian ideology on the basis of sublime intellect, social usefulness and cogent arguments but very few enjoy the monopolistic rights of the interpretation of Islam among the opportunists. Even there, no room for argument or opposition exists.

In the light of these facts, it has become evident that Islam as interpreted by the self-seekers has nothing to offer nor can it redeem the oppressed men and women of the

world from the clutches of force and violence. Further, the self-seekers and their Islam are a great obstruction in the way to peace and unity, brotherhood and mutual understanding of men.

The Real Philosophy of Islam

In the above lines, important points have been discussed and there remains no room for confusion that the real philosophy of Islam is entirely different from the version of the obscurantists. The real Islamic ideology is far above the fake belief and rituals and the distinction of caste, creed and colour. Similarly, the real Islam is free from the vices of hatred and prejudice, petty sectarian and communal feelings, class exploitation, violence and force. It has no clash with the law of evolution. Fundamentally and essentially, Islam preaches universal love and peace, equality and fraternity. For other affairs of life, it permits men of learning and intellect to modify their ways according to the urges of time and society. The claim of the opportunists that their version of Islam is an unchangeable programme for every age and place, for each aspect of life and segment of society, and they have every right to intercede in the affairs of an individual or of the society, is nothing, but a conceited notion. Such an attitude is in fact against the teachings of Islam.

THE THIRD CLAIM OF THE OPPORTUNISTS

The third important claim of the self-styled interpreters of Islam is that Quran is the final source of information and guidance in this world and for the world Hereafter. They vehemently plead that.

- a) It is the Book of God.
- b) It contains all worldly and Heavenly wisdom.

a) The Book of God

'The Quran is a divine Book': In its explanation, there is a hell of difference between a Muslim priest and a Muslim mystic. The priest lays much stress on the belief that, the Quran, as a document was first prepared by God and then it was revealed in piecemeal through Gabriel to the Prophet at different times. The Messenger of God repeated it and his companions either jotted it down or memorised it. Thus, this idea of the priest is based on the personal concept of God. At the same time, this concept is un-Islamic and a reminiscence of the primitive days.

As regards the skies, it is said that their number is seven. Like roofs, they are laid on each other. According to the modern scientific researches, there exist no such skies. Further, the belief that God inscribed the Book at His particular place is to limit Him. Then He sent the Quranic text to the Prophet through a messenger called Gabriel. There are worldly thoughts which are woven around the concept of God.

To the mystic, the Holy Quran is that divine blessing which was uttered by the Holy Prophet at sublime moments and in the state of heightened inspiration. According to their concept, God is timeless and spaceless. He is far above the comprehension of human beings. He is Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent. For communicating His message, he neither needs a document to be first written and then sent through a messenger, nor does He require material objects for the delivery of His message.

b) Contains all Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom

According to the claim of the Muslim priest, there exist directions in the Quran for the solution of the problems of all ages. It means that it may furnish material even on constitution in accordance with the need of the states of the modern times. It may also provide guidance in economic, social, political, scientific and technical fields. The Quran is the source of all knowledge and contains the solutions of all the individual and collective problems ever since the day of its revelation till the Dooms Day (even afterwards). On the basis of this assertion, the priest establishes his monopoly on Islam, deeming his leadership as highly essential. But in order to find out the iota of truth in the jargon of the priest, when we study the Quran, we get four types of verses:

- a) Clear verses revealing the fundamental principles.
- b) Symbolic or figurative verses.
- c) Verses regarding injunction of temporary nature.
- d) Verses regarding secondary problems.

a) Clear Verses Revealing the Fundamental Principles

In the verses of this type, the following points are elucidated:

1. God has appointed His Prophets and messengers at all times and in all regions. These representatives have guided men according to the demands of time.
- 2) There has been a unity and uniformity in the messages of all the Prophets.

3. As a religion, Islam is all natural. It is in consonance with the law of evolution.
4. All the worldly objects e.g. body and soul, religious faiths, knowledge and information keep on developing each day according to the law of evolution.
5. The fundamental objective of religion and that of divine guidance is to promote universal peace and unity, fellow-feeling and brotherhood.
6. The anti-thesis to the law of evolution is infidelity which breeds hatred and prejudice.

b) Symbolic or Figurative Verses

The symbolic verses are of such a type in which:

1. The tales about the prophets and about the old tribes are related.
2. The description is made of the creation of Adam, the genesis of world, the making of canopy and the seat of God. At places, the visage, hands and feet of God are mentioned.
3. The description of Heaven, Hell and Dooms Day is made.

The symbolic or figurative verses are not vividly clear. To insist on their overt meaning, is to undermine the majesty of Islam, especially in the eyes of men of learning. It is because of the fact that such tales are generally legendary and are proven incorrect in the light of reason and intellect.

c) Verses Regarding Injunctions of Temporary Nature

These are the verses which were revealed about the then prevailing conditions or emergencies. When the conditions

changed, those commands did not remain in force. For example, holy war or Jihad (for preaching purposes), keeping captured men and women as slaves and treating them as booty, seizing or looting the belongings of the infidels, killing the infidels whenever or wherever they are to be seen.

d) Verses Regarding Secondary Problems

These are such type of verses in which various terms of punishment are specified, keeping in view the social norms of those times. For example, the amputation of the hand of a thief, death penalty for murder, stoning to death for adultery or hundred flogs as the case may be, are the sentences. Since the nature of these secondary problems and their demands differ according to the social values of every age; therefore with the passage of time, changes occur in society. Values also change with time. Neither the rules and laws retain their old shape nor do old injunctions keep their sanctity.

This law of Nature works on all religions which have come into existence through the revealed books. It is because each of those revealed books reflected the social urges of its time. The conservative Muslim priest admits that owing to the changes in the social norms, each succeeding divine book was an improvement on the former one. Therefore, he considers the injunctions contained in other divine books as cancelled. But, on the other hand, he does not acknowledge that in the Quran too, there are injunctions for only a specific period or commands which do not suit the changed conditions of the present times, although certain injunctions were out-dated in the world of Islam centuries ago. The Muslim priest does not relent his persistence only because, he has apprehensions that such an acknowledgement may

perhaps slacken his hold on the society. To avoid this apprehension, he wants to see the Muslim much more backward as compared to the men of the entire world and also divided into innumerable sects. In his interpreted Islam, there exists nothing which may satisfy the urges of the modern scientific age. However, he makes a lot of claims regarding the solution of problems of not only earthly life but of terrestrial life too.

Beyond doubt, like other divine books, much can be gained from the Quran regarding certain fundamental things and, at places, it may act as a guiding force for humanity. But in many other domains of life, we shall have to give due importance to the intellect and experiment along with the cultural and social urges of time.

THE FOURTH CLAIM OF THE OPPORTUNISTS

Those who present Islam in their own colour, also lay much stress that the Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) was not only the last prophet, but he should also be considered as the last reformer and guide. Further, they plead that all the teachings and guidance ceased with him. In this context too, the versions of the Muslim priest and the Muslim mystics are different. The priest pleads:

1. The Prophet presented a new religion. Consequently, all the previous religions were discarded. No other legitimate religion will come into existence in future.
2. Prayers, exercises, beliefs, rites, moral and social codes are the real essence of the teachings of Islam or the teachings of the Prophet. These create distinction between a Muslim and a non-Muslim.
3. The Holy Prophet is the leader and guide of only the Muslims.
4. The Muslims alone can be his favourite followers.
5. The Messenger of God was assigned this role so as to

deliver to world a spiritual message and a system of life to continue for ever.

6. Mohammed (p.b.u.h.) was the last Prophet. No prophet shall ever succeed him, nor shall the world need a guide and a reformer after him. His religion shall last till the Dooms Day.

But the faith of the mystic is as follows:

1. Fundamentally speaking, the Holy Prophet introduced no new religion. Islam blossomed into its real shape under the process of evolutionary law. It has been the religion of all the previous prophets.
2. The mission of the Prophet of Islam was not to give birth to new distinctions and discords. His mission was to promote the feelings of love and brotherhood, removing thereby every form of prejudice.
3. To limit the universal teachings of the Prophet of God to certain overt beliefs, rites and formal codes, is to undermine his lofty mission and ideal.
4. To regard the Holy Prophet as the leader of only the Muslims, is to contradict a fact. Verily, he is the leader, the guide and the messiah of the entire mankind.
5. Every virtuous being in this world is his follower; all those who are not virtuous, do not belong to him.
6. The life of the Holy Prophet reflected two-fold aspects. One aspect was 'revealed' and the other was 'concealed'. The overt aspect showed him as the administrator, the Commander-in-Chief and the performer of all duties as a living being. This objective had been fulfilled during his life-time. It was temporary and short-lived. The real objective of his prophethood lay in the covert aspect of his life which included his preachings of love and brotherhood, his moral and spiritual training of men and

his striving for the progress and prosperity of the whole humanity. Beyond doubt, this objective is of permanent value and this was the very purpose of his prophethood. The mystic has been trying to follow the latter aspect of the Prophet's life and has adopted a creed considerably different from that of the opportunists and exhibitionists.

7. By the Holy Prophet, the mystic means that human mind has attained that stage of development that, after the last Messenger, God no longer needs to guide man with revelations or super-intellect. After the Holy Prophet, the veil between the Creator and the created is lifted and the Almighty has conveyed His eternal and final message of love to the humanity. After him, there remains no need for any other divine message.

Therefore, the Muslim mystic believes that in the light of this faith, all overt religious laws and injunctions have lost their validity with the passage of time. The democratic governments have the power to enforce them. In the conduct of these affairs, the mystic deems intervention of the priest as illegitimate. He believes that the slogan of establishing a religious government is very often raised by a clergy because it is an artifice to serve his selfish motives. Religion, as a matter of fact, is a personal affair of man which is between him and his God. The intervention of others, acting as the intermediary, is to ridicule the faith and the finality of the Prophethood. The mystic deems Islam as the universal message of peace and brotherhood for mankind. He does not like to get himself involved in petty religious differences lest the real objective should be ignored.

THE FIFTH SLOGAN OF THE OPPORTUNISTS

The fifth slogan of the fundamentalists who try to interpret Islam in terms of their own liking, has been that the Muslims are the chosen creatures of God. Thus, they are His favourite beings. Therefore, it is their birth right and the foremost duty to lead the entire world. The real purpose of this slogan has been to misguide the simple-minded Muslims so as to prepare them for sacrifice, thereby paving way for the opportunists to grab power and amass money. On the other hand, the mystics have always regarded the enslavement or exploitation of the weak as against the teachings of Islam.

The mystic knows very well that most of them considered as "the chosen creatures of God" have never adopted such ways which the Almighty approved. It was because of differences and contradictions that a large number of sects cropped up. Each sect declared the followers of other sects as infidels or renegades to Islam, torturing mercilessly and shedding blood of their opponents. Barring others, these men brutally massacred Imam Hussain, the grandson of the Holy Prophet, along with his relatives and friends. The dead bodies of the martyrs were trampled under horses' hooves and their heads were pitched on the spears for exhibition in towns and villages. Hundreds and thousands of the followers of the Prophet, pious men, saints and upright men were first subjected to extreme torture and then they were done to death. In the subsequent ages, Mansoor, Sarmad, Shams Tabrez, Shah Bilal, Siyah Inayat Soofi and scores of such great men were killed by none else but by the Muslims.

Whenever a Muslim ruler decided to get rid of an upright man, he was always supported by his paid priests and his men-at-arms. The whole Muslim history is replete with such events. One who tries to feed the Muslims on such

hollow slogans or sheer sentiments, claiming them to be the superior beings or to be the leaders of the world, he is either ignorant of the Muslim history or is deliberately trying to hoodwink the people for his personal gains. Such a person may enjoy popularity or command respect among the men of his own creed, but his popularity is short-lived. Because, with each passing day, the Muslim masses are becoming more and more conscious. That day is not far when such exploiters will be fully exposed and will have no place in society.

Apart from the creed of the mystics, if the claim of the opportunists is judged in the light of reason and past experience, it will prove entirely wrong. A glaring example in this respect can be cited of the Punjab riots in 1953. For its enquiry, the Government of Pakistan had constituted a commission consisting of two High Court Judges named Mr. Justice Mohammad Munir and Mr. Justice Rustam Kiyani. In their report, the learned members of the Commission stated that the reputed religious scholars who appeared before them as witnesses, had no unanimity of opinion regarding the Islamic State and Islamic way of life. Further, each of them held a different opinion of Islam from the other. The scholar of a sect declared the followers of other sects as misguided and infidels. The learned judges expressed their opinion that if the evidence of those scholars was to be relied upon, there would not be a single Muslim.

This is the plight of the faith of these so-called Muslims, but if you look at their actions, you will come across innumerable men who are not only deep down corrupt but who are liars, hypocrites and tyrants of the worst order. These men keep on sucking the blood of the poor and the indigent. They are also inimical to each other. In the wake of such a sad state of affairs, how can the Muslims be called a nation which is based on the unity of thought and action? Such a nation has neither existed in past, nor does it exist

at present nor can it exist in future. This slogan is contrived only to serve the vested interests of the ruling class which has nothing to do with Islam in practice. In the context of the present-day world, this slogan has become all the more absurd because there is hardly a single Muslim country which can be compared with any of the advanced countries of the world. Thus, when all the Muslim countries are backward, how can the Muslims be regarded as "the chosen creatures of God" or men born for the leadership of the world? Such a conceited notion is nothing but self-deception and ignorance.

On the very basis of such a concept of nationhood, the Pakistan Movement was initiated in the Sub-continent. In 1943, a pamphlet was distributed on behalf of Sind Muslim League which contained the following points. It was claimed that the creation of Pakistan was a must because:

1. It would be a Kingdom of God on earth.
2. Its citizens would enjoy equal rights and there would be an equitable distribution of wealth.
3. Only the chaste, the upright and the God-fearing men would run the government.
4. All religions and all sects of Islam would enjoy complete freedom.
5. It would be the responsibility of the government to eliminate poverty, oppression, ignorance and economic exploitation.
6. Civil liberties would be guaranteed and free legal services would be provided by the State to every citizen.
7. Virtues alone, not power and pelf, would be the criteria for human dignity.

Now, judge by yourself, which of the promises was fulfilled after the creation of Pakistan? At the first glance,

you will know that the evils which were assured to be uprooted, have been existing even to this day. It is something different that many more evils have multiplied. Pakistan has unfortunately become a hunting-ground for its rulers and martial law has become the order of the day. The condition of the masses is deteriorating day by day. No good has so far come out. On the other hand, owing to the broad-based movement for the genesis of this country which was based purely on sentiments, the following were the results:

1. As a result of dislocation, millions of the Hindus and the Muslims are homeless as yet and they are leading impoverished life.
2. Hundred thousands of men were brutally murdered. Thousands of women were abducted and property worth millions of rupees was damaged.
3. The feelings of hatred and enmity have so much permeated in the two peoples that both are daggers drawn and, instead of ameliorating the conditions of their people, they squander money on the purchase of arms. Further, in order to browbeat the other, each of the nation plays to the tune of the super-powers.
4. As a result of bad blood between the two countries, the feelings of brotherhood, toleration and mutual respect have altogether vanished.

When we try to find out the root-cause of these ill-feelings, we learn that nothing but the extremist attitude is the main reason for worsening the relations. On our side, the bad blood is created mainly by the explanation and slogan of the opportunists who have always exploited Islam for their vested interests. Owing to these mischievous and slanderous slogans, the simple-minded people are ever duped. Their attention is distracted from the vital issues of life and they are entangled with such problems which pay rich

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dividends only to the rulers and the opportunists. Thus, Islam which has a universal appeal and which conveys a message of love and peace, is debased into an instrument of hatred, coercion and violence.

The ugly situation which has resulted from this accursed idea in Pakistan, can be summarised in the following points:

1. On account of religious discrimination, even in the political affairs of the country, the non-Muslims are feeling extremely insecure about their future. In fact, they appear to be disillusioned.
2. Some Muslim sects, the liberal Muslims and the followers of mysticism have started feeling a pinch because of the atmosphere charged with religious frenzy.
3. Crude theocracy and its increasing terror has obstructed objective and scientific researches in the country. At the same time, it has throttled new discoveries and inventions.
4. To serve the vested interests of a particular group, the small provinces are gobbled up in the name of so-called unity. The people of these small provinces are being exploited. Under the pernicious One-unit System, the people of these small provinces were deprived of their civil rights. They were also economically, socially and culturally exploited.
5. The people of East Pakistan*, despite being in majority, were deprived of their just and legitimate rights.
6. In spite of the passage of a long time, there has been no settlement with India on the problem of Kashmir, nor has Afghanistan been approached for the solution of the Pakhtoonistan problem. As a result of these problems, we are forced to spend on a huge army which is becoming a ruling army.

7. The rulers have kept on feeding the people on fake slogans. These slogans are unnecessarily given the shape of political problems.
8. The people are politically conscious but attempts are made to benumb their consciousness and slogans are being vociferously raised to run the country on the religious lines. Besides the laws of inheritance and marriage contract, the traditional Islam has no concern with the laws of the present governments nor can Islam, as interpreted by the Muslim priest, guide the present technical and scientific society.
9. As a result of the misunderstanding about Islam caused by the interpretation of the Muslim priests, the young men are feeling disgusted with religion. These young people have started feeling Islam as an instrument of force, coercion and exploitation.

Allama I.I. Kazi, opposing the misconceived notion that Islam belongs to a particular group or region, says:

"A true Muslim adapts himself to each and every society because of his lofty thoughts and noble virtues. In the past, some such men spread the teachings of Islam in the nook and corner of the world (of course without weapon and army). Today, efforts are being made to restrict the followers of this natural religion to a particular area. Islam came as a force to spread and not to be restricted. Such an attempt is based on lack of understanding of the real teachings of Islam. It also reflects the cowardice of those who are called Muslims".

A great Muslim scholar and the founder of Khaksar Tehrik, Allama Enayat Ullah Khan Mashraqi, has written in more explicit words in his famous book entitled "Tazkira":

"The present grouping of people is artificial and unnatural. Every virtuous being, whichever religion he apparently

* East Pakistan formed a part of Pakistan when this book was written.

belongs to, is a Muslim. In the same way, each bad man is a non-Muslim".

THE SIXTH SLOGAN OF THE OPPORTUNISTS

Those who interpret Islam in the light of their vested interests, very often raise the cry:

"Islam is the only means of the salvation for mankind. Therefore, it is necessary to wage war for its expansion".

If this slogan is analysed, it will appear to be as shallow and misleading as other slogans of the opportunists. Such a slogan is raised only to dupe and mislead the simple-minded Muslims so that the self-seekers may fatten at the cost of the masses.

I have stated in the preceding lines that after the Holy Prophet, never has there existed the unified concept of Islam nor will it ever exist in future either. Therefore, a question arises as to what type of Islam will redeem the world from its troubles so that it must be forced upon the people of the whole world. Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi, an eminent scholar, being influenced by these slogans of the Muslim priests, said:

"Some of the Muslims in India have such a misconceived notion with regard to their nationality which has no existence in the world of reality. We have been thinking about an Islamic party for a long time. But neither there exists any plan about it in our minds nor does any such party exist anywhere in the world. We have confined ourselves to such a world of imagination that we have not only become all ignorant of the history, progress and struggle for freedom of all other Muslim nations but, in our own country, we do not have a clear-cut and well chalked-out plan".

In the present age, where the Muslims are lagging behind in almost every walk of life, is it not self-deception to claim

that they are born to rule the world? How can the Muslims rule the far more civilized, cultured, developed and powerful nations of the world? What is there in the priesthood which will be a source of inspiration to the people as a whole? Is the entire world mad so as to accept the leadership of the poor, the illiterate and the superstitious? And when the nations of the world do not come to the fold of Islam out of their free will, what power do the monopolists of Islam wield so as to force them to accept their leadership?

In fact, the greatness and sanctity of Islam in the modern times demands that priesthood should be done away with as early as possible. It is also evidently clear that priesthood is a curse, whether it be defended by the philosophy of Allama Iqbal or by the writings of Maulana Maudoodi. The efforts being made to propagate the idea based on hatred, narrow-mindedness, violence and fascism in the present civilized world, are the curses of the primitive days.

In addition to it, the concept of preaching and spreading theocracy in these times is as ridiculous as a mouse claiming for the hunt of a lion. Even those Western powers which enjoy superiority over the countries of the world by all means, appear to be shunning force in their dealings with the weaker nations. These powers have at least apparently learnt to adopt the principle of co-existence. The Russian Communists whose fundamental faith had been to induct their way of life in other regions of the world through sheer force, have given up their creed. They too have contented with other ways such as mutual cooperation or aid in social, cultural and economic fields. In the world of today, the only countries which believe in the employment of force are Communist China, Pakistan and Israel. It is obvious that in the present atomic age, these countries cannot subjugate the entire world. At the most, the rulers of these countries can suppress their own countrymen who

do not conform to their views. Thus, they may perpetuate their power through these enticing slogans.

THE SEVENTH SLOGAN OF THE OPPORTUNISTS

'Religion and politics are inseparably one'. This is the seventh important slogan of the opportunists. The main objective of this slogan is that a dictator or a group of despotic men be the rulers or at the helm of affairs in a Muslim country.

Attempts are being made to run the affairs of the country in the light of the tainted interpretation of the opportunists – those who act as the paid pipers of the rulers. History is a witness that such types of governments have proved to be extremely repressive and exploitative for the people. Such type of governments are also immune to reason and argument, justice and fair play. In the modern terminology, this kind of government is called "fascist".

Among the Muslims, hundreds of interpretations of the Quran and Sunnah are in vogue and the Muslims are divided into various sects. Which sect is right and which wrong, who is going to decide it? And such a decision can be made or not? Whatever may be the claim of some persons under their compelling vested interests, it is all futile. When there could not be unanimity of opinion within about 1,400 years, what solid grounds and possibility are created now to settle it.

Leave the fundamental differences. There exist a lot of differences of the secondary nature and there appears no hope of patching up these differences. For instance, take the family laws as implemented by the government. One group passionately pleads that it is anti-Islamic while another group hails it as Islamic, advocating for its implementation with the same degree of vehemence. Then both the groups clamour for the establishment of the Islamic government.

mindfulness of the leaders of religion. The Muslim history is a testimony of the fact that the Mullahs (priests) always played in the hands of the rulers and they have always justified such actions which brought a bad name to Islam.

Except exploitation of the masses, there exists nothing in priesthood which may be of any value in the modern style of life. Further, religion is created for man; man is not created for religion. When the laws of religions lost their utility because of the change in the conditions of life, how can mere conventional importance benefit the society?

I consider priesthood (Mulla-ism) to be a hedra-headed evil. People should be made to know that it is a dangerous means of safeguarding the illegitimate interests of dictators and perpetuating their power. The self-seekers are using Islam as a sheer stunt. To analyse the situation in its real perspective, is the pressing demand of time. The Muslim masses of this country should realise as to why other Muslim countries have done away with priesthood. Why is it that in Pakistan alone there is a hue and cry for the Islamic system of government?

There appears a glaring contradiction in the thought and

The simple folks who are misled in the name of Islam, are ignorant of history. Had they even a little knowledge of history, they would have known that religion and politics do not go together. Whenever politics is punctuated with religion, it has resulted in untold miseries to communities and nations. In the light of experience of history, the Hindus, the Christians and some of the Muslim countries have at last abandoned this course. The champions of politics allied with religion are not only the enemies of Islam but the enemies of all those whom they easily befooled and excite. Further, by their constant taxing of religion, people are sure to be disappointed and disgusted with religion soon. In Russia and other countries, the growth of atheism or disgust with religion was the result of undue hold and narrow-

Two Interpretations of Islam

action of the Mullahs (priests) in this country that on the one hand they raise slogans for the implementation of unadulterated Islamic system; on the other hand, they also support the democracy which was introduced by the Greeks and successfully practised by the Britons. Further, on the one hand, these clergies put a condition that the high officials and functionaries of the government should be well versed in religious learning; on the other hand, they plead that everyone who has attained a certain age, but irrespective of caste and creed, is entitled to vote and contest election. They also regard the emancipation of women and their education as against the teachings of Islam. But, at the same time, they grant women equal right of voting. On the one hand, they make tall talks about the Islamic culture; on the other hand, they hit their enemies below the belt and use provocative language against them. They pronounce photography as unlawful in Islam but persuade the press to get their own photographs published. Similarly, the mullahs (priests) proscribe dancing and music, but they enjoy a lot with their own radio and T.V. sets. They condemn the Western civilization but, with the singular exception of their dress, they make utmost use of comforts and luxuries which are innovated by the West. For example, they use things such as soap, towel, flush toilets, clock, telephone, car, T.V. set, dinner set, sofa, table and chair etc. They may probably be considering these things out of the Western culture but, at the same time, extorting money in the name of ceremonies and rituals is a sacred act in their eyes.

The mullahs (priests) know very well that the degree to which the society is changed, they can neither enact nor implement such conventional but harsh laws like amputation of hands of the thieves, stoning the adulterer, slaughtering their opponents, forcing others to keep beards, making men forcibly pray and keeping women under seclusion. But, in spite of their helplessness, they keep on harping

on the same string. All these contradictions of Mullah-ism (priesthood) are a glaring proof that these slogans are but for hoodwinking the simple-minded Muslims and, having played with the sentiments of the masses, they try to derive maximum gains for themselves.

History is a witness that, because of religious domination, the Brahmins (High-caste Hindus) turned millions of men into untouchables. Similarly, in the name of religion, the Christian priests burnt into fire millions of men and a large number of men were killed in the Crusades. The Muslim history is too replete with events of such atrocities. The Caliphate was established in the name of Islam and Ijma (Consensus) and the Caliphate degenerated into kingship. When the policy of a ruler was opposed, it was regarded as the opposition of religion. Thus, the sects came into being in quick succession. There existed a lot of bad blood among them and, for centuries, much of human blood was shed in the name of religion. Humanism and fellow-feeling lost their appeal. The vanquished were ill-treated. They were tortured to death. The ways of torture were albeit different. Sometimes they were laid in the walls alive, sometimes they were done to death after their limbs being chopped off and sometimes their bodies were trampled under horses' hooves. Then their heads were raised on spears, their women and children were driven to different places as captives. These and many other tyrannical measures were proudly adopted by most of the Caliphs and kings to crush their opponents.

The martyrdom of Hazrat Usman, the battles of Amir Moavia with Hazrat Ali, the most poignant tragedy of the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain, the slaughter of one hundred and twenty thousand men at the hands of Hajjaj bin Yusuf in addition to his numerous battles in which thousands of people were killed, the extermination of graves

of the Omayyads and of their supporters by Abu Saffah Abbasi, the bloody battles between the Abbasiids and the Fatimids, the destruction of Baghdad and other parts of the Muslim world by the Mongols, the downfall of the Moghuls in India after Aurangzeb, are some of the horrible events which occurred in the name of religion and were caused by the extremist policies of some of the sects of Islam. Thus, the saying came to be coined, "Islam was daubed in its own blood".

Despite all these gory and horrible events, this has been the stunt of Mullahism (priesthood) that the murderers, plunderers and tyrants are remembered by the sanctimonious appellations of Amir-ul-Momineen (leader of the faithful), ghazi (great warrior) and Zil-lil-lah (the shadow of God) etc., and those who dedicated their lives for the dignity and greater glory of mankind, those who were chaste and upright are condemned and down-graded. Mansoor was put on the gallows, Shams Tabrez was skinned off when alive, Sarmad was assassinated, Shah Enayat was martyred and Shah Bilal was done to death in a torturous way, but the misguided Mullahs (priests) never utter their names. The example set by Imam Hussain provides the greatest strength and inspiration to every freedom fighter and righteous person: but the Mullah does not speak about him.

Our rulers who are basically subservient to their vested interests, give a posture they are believers in the principle of a peaceful solution to the problems. This is only to show off to the world. This way the rulers pose themselves as the champions of freedom, justice and human rights. But they pay no heed to the principle of granting autonomy to the smaller provinces like Sind, Baluchistan and N.W.F.P. whose legitimate rights they have been usurping ever since the creation of this country. In fact, all that glitters is not gold. To set up dictatorial system of government, to crush the opposition by force, to deprive the people of their funda-

mental and legitimate rights, are the outcome of mixing religion with politics.

In the present times, when all the religions are struggling for their survival and are engrossed in safeguarding the beliefs with regard to the existence of God, individual liberty and life after death are the concepts which can prove deterrent as against the challenge of atheism. The atheism is bent upon uprooting the fundamental beliefs of religions, thereby liberating people from the shackles of superstitions. Its attendants are intellect and science. In such a state of affairs, it behoved the custodians of religions to discard the conventional bigotry, superstition, hatred and narrow-mindedness and adopt a more positive approach by presenting religion in an attractive and exalted way and projecting religion as a vanguard of the dignity of man, of individual and collective liberty. Thus, they could have encountered the rising tide of atheism and agnosticism. As compared to the believers in other religions, the followers of Islam, especially the Muslims of Pakistan, should have come forward. Because in no other part of the world, as in this land, such a hue and cry is made in the name of Islam and because nowhere else there exist as many claimants and monopolists of Islam as in Pakistan.

But we see that everything is being done contrary to the urges of the time and instigation is made without any reason. To combat atheism, not only that no cogent arguments are being advanced but that, as a result of the negative attitude, those holding different opinion in politics, are being victimised. In this way, ground is being rapidly paved for atheism. Whether religion retains its magnificence or it is lost, they are not concerned with it. They are after their own interests.

However, if we are to save our people and also the greatness of Islam from the impending doom, if we wish that the noble ideals and humanity may flourish; if we want to get

rid of tyranny and violence, hatred and prejudice, selfishness and avarice, we shall have to keep religion and politics apart. Further, we shall in no case rely on the interpretation of the Muslim priests, but we shall be guided by such an interpretation of Islam which is capable of solving the problems of the present-day world and that too in accordance with the pressing demands.

THE MYSTICS' INTERPRETATION OF ISLAM

At different places in the Holy Quran, mention is made of such

رَاسِحُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ مُتَّقِينَ

'upright men' who have 'the perfect knowledge'
and they are also described as the

أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

'Ponderers over Reality'

Such men are reckoned as the right knowers of God, of the verses of the Holy Book and of Islam. For instance, I present the following verses:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ
وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ
ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِحُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ
لَهُنَّ أَجْرٌ مِمَّا يَدْرِبُونَ وَمَا يَذْكُرُهُ أَهْلُ الْأَلْبَابِ هـ

"God has revealed unto thee (the Holy Prophet) the Book. In that those verses are of permanent and fundamental value and the rest of verses are metaphorical. Further, those men whose hearts are vitiated, follow the metaphorical verses and interpret them according to their wishes and create discord as well as disharmony. Although they do not know the real meanings of these verses, yet they interpret them. The real meaning is either known to God or to those who have perfect knowledge and say that they have been able to repose faith through the knowledge transmitted by God. These words are uttered by those who meditate and reflect".

ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

"That is the Book for the righteous men". "Verily they seek guidance and wisdom from the Book".

قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ فَمِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكْذِبِينَ
هَٰذَا بَيَانٌ لِّلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ه

"Very many people have preceded you. Go around the world and try to find out what consequences they have met, for their wrong course of action. Those directions are for those who are good and upright".

Now a question arises as to who those upright and men of learning are, about whom a description is made in the Quran. Hardly a person is to be found in the entire world who regards himself completely bereft of beauty and intellect. The Muslim priests may very well claim that they are the persons who possess all the requisite attributes and thus they are addressed in Quran. But self-praise is no

recommendation. They are the persons who are described at other places in the Book of God. The righteous men are indeed those who are clearly defined. They are those:

1. Who do not incite trouble, nor do they create hatred and prejudice through the metaphorical verses. They follow the verses of fundamental value, promote fellow-feelings and peace in the world.
2. Who do not form any opinion or arrive at any decision or profess any faith unless they have very well thought over the matter.
3. Who seek knowledge about the tribes and nations of the past either through study or through observation. Further, they look into the causes of the rise and fall of the nations and learn a lesson from those causes.

It is an established fact that all the people of the world do not possess uniform intellect, talents and ability. Some are superstitious and ignoramus, some are happy-go-lucky and a few are learned. Similarly, some are hard-hearted and cruel, some are kind and benevolent. Somebody is selfish and self-seeker, somebody is selfless and sacrificing. However, there exist men of contrasting shades of character. The same contrast in men exists with regard to tendencies and modes of behaviour. This contrast has been existing ever since the creation of man.

Among the followers of each religion of the world, two types of men have fundamentally existed as a result of this contrast. A group of men attach much importance to the outer form of religion while the other group regards its inner spirit and real objective of paramount importance. To the first group belong such men as magicians, sorcerers and priests of all the religions. But in the fold of the other group, there are men such as prophets, apostles, seers, saints and persons of very great intellectual, moral and spiritual prowess. Since the superstitious and ignoramus people have

always been in majority, therefore, religion was encumbered with rituals, because it was this way that their desire was fulfilled. Thus, the rituals became very common. But since wise men and perceivers of truth have ever been in small number, therefore they kept their preachings confined to only the conscientious beings and thus their ideas could not spread far and wide.

However, if the achievements of the men of this group are to be viewed, the effects of their teachings will be seen everywhere in the world. But these effects are largely visible in Greece, Egypt, Arabia, China and India. Notwithstanding the difference in caste, creed, colour and country, the fundamental beliefs and principles of this group have been almost uniform all over the world.

The Muslims mystics have laid the foundation of the spirit of Islam on love and knowledge about God. This love and knowledge are limitless. But, very like life, they are always moving and evolving. Very true was Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai when he said:

نکوسند و سورجو نکوسیرھوسک
عددنہ آھی عشق، پجائی پان لہی

"Limitless is the taste of sorrow and love knows no bounds. Love is not a number which may be calculated. But the true pursuer can reach its highest place".

According to the Muslim mystics, whatever the guidance the Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) provided for the betterment of individual and social life, all that acquired the shape of 'jurisprudence'. Similarly, all the guidance given to the men of conscience and learning, assumed the form of 'observance'. To the mystics, the sanctimonious personage of the Holy Prophet is that of the city of knowledge, and the

lustrous figure of Hazrat Ali is that of the gate of that city. All the 'ways of observance' find their openings in that entrance.

The Two Groups of Muslim Mystics

The Muslim mystics belong to two groups. A bunch of the mystics consists of such great men who founded their order on the basis of the Caliphate and allegiance. In this way, they chastened the soul and moral fibre of their followers. The second group comprises of such righteous men who tried to perceive the reality of all the objects and dedicated their lives to the promotion of peace, progress and well-being of mankind.

The First Group

This group of the Muslim mystics has four orders namely, the Qadari, the Suharwardi, the Chisti and the Naqshbandi. The great saints of these orders served the people in their own ways. They not only rendered valuable services by morally uplifting the masses, but tried to inculcate in men feelings of endurance and fortitude. It was because of their teachings that sectarian hatred and prejudices were reduced to a great extent and religious toleration was largely practised. The saints of these orders also preached for abstaining from the use of force and coercion. At the same time, they stressed upon the control of self. 'Amity towards everyone and hatred for none' was the very essence of the gospel and mission of the saints belonging to all these four orders.

Hazrat Junaid Baghdadi, Hazrat Shibli, Hazrat Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, Hazrat Shaikh Abu Najeeb Suhrawardy,

Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti Ajmeri and Hazrat Khwaja Bahauddin Naqshbandi are venerable saints of these orders. These great men not only impressed men of letters but they succeeded in attracting a large number of common people towards them. These saints had a set policy that they ignored the maze of the outward rituals of the religion, and yet at the same time, they reformed people by their pragmatic methods. In fact, they contributed a lot to the improvement of the morals of the common man.

The Second Group

In this group of the mystics, there are such saints who did not deem it necessary either to establish institutions in a formal way nor did they confine their teachings to particular institutions. The outward beliefs and rituals of a religion lost their value in the eyes of the saints of this group. To them, the rituals appeared as detrimental to religion. They pursued knowledge freely and tried to reach the core of all the problems. They reflected on serious and searching questions such as: What is life? What is the purpose of life? What is the truth about life and life Hereafter? Such and many kindred were the questions on which they pondered.

In this connection, these saints gained considerably from the treasure of knowledge bequeathed by the old philosophers and jurists of Egypt, Persia, Greece, Arabia and India. Through their extensive research, enquiry, analysis and comparison, they discovered the secret of the fundamental Unity of God which lay hidden underneath the exuberance of religions and faiths. This is the reason that, in their search for the Truth, they worked with unrelenting daring and perseverance. They found the outward form of faith and rituals of no value and expressed with utmost clarity

the truth about the Ultimate Reality.

The saints had known that the real purpose of religion was service to humanity. But the real purpose was thwarted and service to mankind was denied because conventional belief and lifeless rituals had obstructed the way. Therefore, religion ceased to be a force. Instead of love, it sowed the seeds of discord, prejudice and hatred. Thus, in the name of religion or sect, a cleavage was created between man and man. Each religious group became an exploiting group and the vested interests of each group clashed with other groups. Instead of being an island of peace, the world had become a pit of dissension. Therefore, the saints found no other course to adopt except to preach unity. They dedicated their lives to this noble mission.

From among these saints, there emerged two groups: the extrovert saints, the introvert saints. Both believed in the Oneness of God (Wahdat-ul-Wajood). Both were inspired by love and pursuit for the knowledge of God. The only difference was in the method of expression. The extrovert saints believed in no expediency and, along with the open preaching of the Oneness of God, they bitterly criticised priesthood too. On the other hand, the introvert saints employed similes, metaphors, symbols and other subtle methods for the expression of their ideas. To the first group belong such saints as Mansoor, Hallaj, Khwaja Farid-uddin Attar, Shams Tabrez, Shaikh Mohiuddin Ibne Arbi, Sarmad, Shah Enayat Shaheed and Sachal Sarmast, etc. In the second category too, there is a galaxy of notable saints. Maulana Rumi, Shah Waliullah, Shah Latif Bhitai and many others are the luminaries of this category of saints.

THE FIRST BELIEF OF A MYSTIC

All the Muslim mystics are believers in the Unity of God (Wahdat-ul-Wajud). Therefore, their first and foremost faith is that "in the background of the diversity of religions, there exists the Oneness of God". This faith has two facets:

- a) God has sent His messengers to all regions and in all ages for the guidance and well-being of mankind.
- b) Some of the teachings of all the prophets have not only been uniform, but of fundamental and permanent value, while some teachings have been in keeping with the problems and ills of their own times.

a) The Arrival of the Messengers in all Ages

On the basis of this belief, the Muslim mystic does not believe that the genesis and control of this whole universe is the result of an accident. His ears are constantly echoed with the words 'Is the purpose of the creation of the whole universe all meaningless?' It is therefore that the mystic perceives a plan, a design and a system in the organisation of the entire universe. He has no doubt about the Controller who is controlling this universe. One may reckon the Controller by any name. Beyond doubt, it is a Force. The Holy Prophet has called the same Force as Allah. Other religions too have named that Power. The followers of religions believe that material things are caused to exist and events are created according to the Will of the same Power. Things retain their original shapes for some time. After some time, they perish. Their shapes are either changed into other shapes or they get merged into other things. This system continues for ever. The mystics have deeply reflected on the planning and the purpose of planning of this

Power, thus acquiring the most precious gem from the Unbounded Sea. But neither they have prided on the well-gotten wealth, nor have they monopolised it, nor have they shirked from guiding people to that Power. On the contrary, they have invited everyone to Him, urging him to try his luck. As Shah Latif Bhitai explicitly says:

شيوڪر سمونڊ جي، جت جروهي تڙجال،
سوين سجن سمونڊ ۾، ماڻڪ موتي لعل،
جي ماسو جڙي مال، ته پوڄا رابرتيئن،

"If you wish to be rich, dive into the depth of Reality, on whose limitless surface, innumerable waves dash. In its recesses, rich treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. If you get the smallest particle of it, you will become rich beyond measure".

As unending is the chain of the universe and the events taking place in it, similarly the discoveries about the universe and occurring changes are never-ceasing. Except God, hardly one has the absolute knowledge of events and the universe. As it is revealed in the Quran:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ ۚ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنْ الْعِلْمِ
إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ۝

"O Prophet! men ask you about the soul (the secret of Nature). Tell them that it is the secret of God. People can know but very little about it".

It is a fact that the prophets, philosophers, seers, scientists and learned men achieve a few drops from the Un-

bounded Ocean. This endeavour for the attainable and unattainable keeps them satisfied and restless. In this way, eagerness goads to discovery and research promotes education. This process continues in every age.

b) The Teachings of Great Men

The teachings of great men in every age consist of two parts: The first part is related to the reality about the universe and the purpose of life. The other deals with the organization and upliftment of human society according to the demands of time. The nature of problems which comes under the purview of the first part, is fundamental and eternal. The problems of the second part are of secondary nature. As regards time, they exist only in a particular period.

The Reality about the Universe

This topic is very wide and it deals with all those questions such as the worldly objects, creation of things, spirit and matter. To the knowledge of the secrets of Nature and their reality, the mystic compares with the unbounded sea or limitless desert. He gets lost in their depths. The more he tries to delve, the more he is wonder-struck and, except bewilderment, he finds nothing. But he keeps on marching ahead. In the words of Hafiz Shirazi:

کس ند است که منزل که معشوق کجا است
این قدر هست که بانگِ صبر سے می آید

"None knows where the abode of the beloved is. But so near it is that the toll of bell is audible".

There is no denying the fact that the searcher of truth does not ascend to the highest point of the divine secret, howsoever rigorous or intermittent may be his endeavour. But, at every step, he feels a new pleasure when a new dimension unravels upon his ken. His curiosity is whetted and he feels that his struggle is not rewarded. Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai states it in the following couplet:

گوليان گوليان مَر لَهان، شال مَر ملان هوت،
من اندر جا لوچ، ساملن سان مائي ٿئي،

"I am ever busy in the pursuit of this object. This curiosity has created a powerful desire in my heart. How good it will be if the object remains unattained, lest its attainment should benumb my feelings".

The Purpose of Life

The real purpose of life for a mystic lies in the continual struggle on the evolutionary path of the universe. He regards love and attachment as a sound basis of the evolution and struggle. To this basis, he feels as the soul of every religion. Love is a centrifugal force which attracts every object and which is the ultimate source of the fulfilment of all objectives. He cares a fig as to when these objectives will materialise. The only passion of his life is to tread its path with all sincerity and perseverance, and at the same time, he may invite others to take the same path. He is never frustrated by the vicissitudes of life nor does he lose hope of bright future. He is fully confident of the truth of his gospel.

Teaching of Secondary and Temporary Value

Regarding the organization and upliftment of human society, there have been teachings of great men in all the ages. But these teachings are of secondary nature and, at certain times, of temporary value. These teachings are of three kinds: pertaining to faith, pertaining to mutual relations of human beings and pertaining to prayers as well as rituals.

As regards faith, ever since the primitive ages, man's mind has been deeply influenced by the concepts of reward and punishment, fear and temptation. These ideas have been so profound and also so universally established that they could not altogether be done away with. The great men were very well aware of the fact. So, they instantly wiped out all those superstitions which they could. But the ideas which were deeply rooted and could not be easily brushed aside, these great men, by the force of their personalities, considerably moulded out their shapes so as to make them suited to the society of their times. Those who had money and power, they exploited the masses in the name of superstition but they were interested in the perpetuation of power. And those who, instead of power and pelf, were gifted with blessings of intellect and knowledge, they tried their best to castigate superstition and rendered valuable services in order to better the lot of human beings.

The men in power borrowed most of the old tribal conventions because of their own personal interests. With these conventions, they managed national and social affairs. Afterwards, these conventions assumed the shape of laws. Similarly, ideas about atonement and sin, good and bad, reward and punishment as articulated by the religious leaders, came to be established as religious code (Shariah). If analy-

sed, incentives of both social and religious codes are fundamentally based on optimism and hope. The only difference between them is that the reward or punishment as granted by the rulers is received in this world and during the lifetime of an individual. But the reward or punishment as promised by the religious men is to be reaped after death. This reward and punishment are in the shape of Heaven and Hell.

Sometimes these temporal and spiritual institutions ran counter to each other. But later on, because of the identity of their interests, both cooperated with each other. Thus, the power rested with the temporal lords, and the position of the religious leaders remained secondary. This was the reason that spiritual lords had to be subservient to the temporal lords, and as exigencies demanded, religious men had to interpret religion in accordance with the wishes of the rulers. Besides, the general masses had to obey the rulers because they could not afford to displease them. It is a fact that rulers exploited the common man. So did religious leaders. The people were kept on being ground under the crushing wheels of temporal and spiritual lords. This process continued for a very long time. In Pakistan, it is unfortunately still going on. In other parts of the world, because of the increasing exploitation of rulers and religious leaders, people have revolted against them because there is a limit to toleration as well.

During the last five hundred years, the world has radically changed. The social life in most of the countries has altogether changed. People departed from sheer conventionalism and gave a serious thought to the governance of their mundane life and affairs. Thus, the need for a constitution arose. As a result of this deep reflection, democracies came into being first in the European countries and, later on, in other countries of the world. Religion was divorced from politics. Religion came to be considered and treated as the

personal affair of man. Superstition, dogma and faith were judged on the touchstone of reason, logic and intellect. Most of the countries have adopted this way of life. But Pakistan is the only exception where, despite enormous changes on social and national level, some groups for their own selfish motives and through their paid agents (priests), are bent upon misusing religion as a source of political exploitation.

As stated earlier, most of the superstitions, dogmas and rituals as defended and propagated by the Muslim priests, have lost their value in the context of the present-day world. If the majesty and dignity of Islam are to be preserved, then there will be no room for these superstitions, dogmas and rituals. But the rulers and the priests appear to be striving for the preservation of these ills because it is through these ills that they prosper. Therefore, they keep on supporting these evils. Abdullah Khwab has rightly said:

ملوکیت ۽ ملا لازم و ملزوم آهن ٻئي،

سڃاتو جن اڃا پوريءَ طرح قرآن ٿي ناهي،

"Kingship and priesthood are inseparably attached to each other. Both are incapable of understanding the teachings of Quran and subordinating their lives in accordance with its messages".

Against the Muslim priests, such a complaint is not for the first time. Even in the past, at different times, voices were raised against their corruption. The main guilt of the priests is that, throughout the past ages, they have been the agents of the kings and rulers. Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai says:

ملین مَنوما، پتو ٿس پیت ۾،

سڃاڻي الله، ٽي ڏنائين ڌوڙ ۾،

Two Interpretations of Islam

"The Muslim priests have poisoned the Muslim society. They are deliberately falsifying truth just to serve their selfish interests. It appears as if the pancreas of a priest is burst (meaning that he has become all timid) and he is diving into dust".

In a similar way, Sachal Sarmast has said about these hypocrites:

منجھایو ماڻھن کی، ماضین مذھبن،
محکم ماڻھن کی، تن جي زنجیرن،
ھون حدیثن کینکي، نہ پر آیتن،
مجن تن کي کین، تیو ملا ٿا مڃن،
سي سوگھا سپیئي ڪیا، نامراد نیرن،

"Past-worshipping religions have misled the people and conventional faith has put them into chains. One who knew nothing about the verses and the traditions, came to be called a priests (Mullah). He has deviated and has made others deviated too".

In the words of Allama Iqbal:

دینِ مَلا فی سبیل اللہ فساد

"The religion of a priest is to create dissension in the way of God".

Teachings Concerning Mutual Relations

Such types of teachings of the great men are fundamentally related to ethics which is called in religious terminology as 'jurisprudence'. There have been social and moral laws in every age, region, religion and faith. The study of anthropology reveals that, with the passage of time, changes have occurred in society and so in moral code. Religious laws too are no exception from the change and evolutionary process. Prophets, saints and philosophers have always initiated changes in conformity with the demand of time. But despite this established fact, the self-centred priest has always played a diabolical role and has obstructed the way to progress and change. In Pakistan, the Muslim priests are making hectic efforts to bring Islamic order. It means that they are striving to re-introduce the bedouin system in the mechanical and industrial age of today.

The common men and simple-minded Muslims appear to be extremely carried away by such types of slogans. It is therefore the bounden duty of every right-thinking person to remove the misunderstanding. So, I have been stressing this point that every sort of laws are the products of time. No laws have been eternal, nor can they ever be so. Laws too change according to the changes in the living conditions and in the society. This is the Law of Nature and it is binding on all religions.

Another important reason is that the masses, being uneducated, are psychologically convention-loving and are not easily prepared to renounce the age-old faiths and rituals handed down to them by their ancestors. In addition to it, the masses are generally past-lovers. The fourth reason is that they lack self-confidence and, therefore, are not able

to work out the solutions of their problems. They therefore seek escape in the romantic atmosphere of the past. The exploiters try to make the most of this shortcoming of the masses.

The exploiters are of firm opinion that in case they succeed in harmonising religion with politics, their interests will be safeguarded and, the danger of awakening in the masses, will no longer exist. Secondly, they will enjoy future domination in religion and politics. Then they will be able to further enlarge their interests. One who impedes their way, will be discredited as a criminal in this world and the world Hereafter. The history of past is replete with such horrible events. It is an irony of fate that in the present society where an acute need is being felt to make judiciary independent of administration, even religion be also entrusted to administration.

The problem that our society is confronted with in the present times, escape from them is no solution. Nor should we try to seek refuge in the misty past. Had there been an attraction in the past orders, our forefathers would not have given them up. The need of the day is that we become self-confident and self-reliant. We try to understand the problems of our age and, as our forefathers moulded laws in accordance with the conditions of their times, we too modify them according to our conditions and time. This way, we can serve ourselves and our people. The following points deserve our immediate attention:

1. Ways and means be eked out to remove poverty and unemployment. Efforts be also made to raise the standard of living of people.
2. The prevalent political systems of the world be studied and the best of system be selected from them. This system be adopted, keeping in view the objective conditions prevailing in the country.

3. Moral and social codes be given a new shape according to the demands of the present society.

The true well-wishers of the country and the people, the lovers of Islam and the benefactors of the Muslims, the mystics and highly educated people grounded in science and technology, regard all the three points as essential.

Insistence on Prayers and Rituals

Psychologically speaking, man has proved to be more emotional and sensitive as compared to other animals. Adversity, loss, sorrow, torture, fear and anger etc., affect his peace of mind. He consequently feels restless. As medical experts have to work on physical ailments, so have the seers and psychologists to cure man of mental sufferings. In the past, there existed primitive methods of treatment. Most of those methods have been discarded in the modern times. Not only that those methods are discarded, but they are considered as highly primitive. In the psychological field, there did exist methods in the past which did satisfy people. Such methods were like worshipping idols, singing hymns in their honour, prayers and supplications, requiems, sacrifice of animals, charms and spells etc. But in the modern times, these things also appear useless. Among the Muslims, most of these things are still in practice. Out of them, prayer is reckoned not only as the most important but as a compulsion. It is regarded as the first and fundamental tenet of faith. As one of the basic pillars of Islam, prayer is binding on all the Muslims. As the couplet says:

روزِ محشر کہ جاں گداز بود
اولیں پریش نماز بود

"On the Doomsday, extremely horrible as it will be, the first question to be posed will be about the prayers".

Notwithstanding the salutary effect of prayers which once upon a time brought about a happy change in feeling and demeanour of the worshippers, it no longer exists today and prayer has become only a mechanical act. Further, it is no longer considered as a means but an end in itself. However, some advantages are still associated with it. It is claimed that.

1. Prayer earns the pleasure of God.
2. Prayer sublimates self.
3. Prayer gives satisfaction to heart.
4. Prayer will ease salvation.
5. Prayer redeems one from sin.

1. Prayer Earns the Pleasure of God

The basis of this faith rests on the concept of a personal God. According to this belief, God is also visualised similar to human beings: He becomes angry or gets pleased. It is also said about Him that He scrutinises all human actions: some human actions please Him while some pain Him. Prayer is, therefore, believed as a right of God, and one who wishes to propitiate Him, he must submit to Him.

It is also claimed that God creates man. He grants him life. God nourishes man, protects him from dangers and accidents. All divine blessings are but for man. Therefore, man too should be thankful to Him for His manifold blessings on which his life and existence depend. Prayer, in fact, is a gesture of man's obedience to God and his sense of gratitude.

To the truth-knowing mystic, the concept of a personal God is unacceptable. On the contrary, he believes in such a

God who has neither a body nor a shape, who is timeless and spaceless, who is immune of human feelings, emotions and other traits. He is Self-existing and Selfless. He is neither procreated by anyone nor has He given birth to anyone. He needs neither the world nor its dwellers. He is devoid of the feelings of propitiation and anger. He is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient. He is much nearer than the jugular vein of man. The mystic further believes that, except God, nothing exists in the whole universe. Whatever is visible, is the reflection of His Self or Attributes. His Attributes and Self are one and the same. This is the stage where a mystic cares not for the prayer and, very like Bedil, he voices:

سپ چڙ يائون سانگ، ڪندا ڪو نماز ڪي،
جيڏانهن عالم آسروم تيڏانهن ڪن نه تانگ،
نڪي پڙهن ڪلمو، نڪي ٻڌن ٻانگ،
لاهوتي بي لانگ، عدم کون اڳي ويا

"Those who have found Reality, they have shunned all. Now, what they will do with prayer. Their whole being is changed. Whatever the common men regard as the source of salvation, they deem all that worthless. Even to recite Kalima (faith) or call for prayer is of no importance to them. They are far above the petty ado and have transcended higher than eternity".

2. Prayer Sublimates Self

By sublimation of self, is meant restraining of animal instincts and feelings. Now we have to find out as to what

the baser feelings are which are essentially to be controlled. What are human desires, feelings and emotions? How are they created? A detailed discussion of them in the pages of this book is not feasible. One who is interested in knowing about them, he may lay his hand on any standard book of psychology. In this context, I shall only say that complete riddance from natural desires is, in the first place, out of control of human nature. Secondly, if there are some such men who have subordinated their passions, even this act will bring no good to the society. This extreme measure, not based on moderation, will make people dull and insipid. There should be a role of passions in the life of an individual as much as Nature wants them to be. The mystics have divided self into three categories: the baser self, the normal self, the contented self.

The Baser Self

This is the worst and the lowest category of self. Under its influence, the desires in an individual are unbridled and, like a beast, he feels no qualm of conscience in the fulfilment of his desires. All the maladies of society and all the catastrophes created by man are the product of this category of self. In the primitive ages, the baser self was the most dominant one. Now, after thousand years of experience of its baneful effect, though much of it is controlled, yet its true colour is reflected in the prejudices of caste, creed and colour or in the intoxication of power and pelf or in other types of evil deeply ingrained into human nature.

The Normal Self

A person having normal self possesses the power to distinguish between 'right' and 'wrong'. He has all the regard for

the established norms of his tribe or society. There is no denying the fact that during different ages and in different tribes and societies, there have been different standards of 'good' and 'bad'. So, a man of normal self generally displays some restraint on his passion. But it does not mean that he becomes completely devoid of passions or that his passions are fully restrained. There is every likelihood that, at moments, he may become a victim of internal conflict and thus try to grab something secretly for his personal gain. Further, for the satisfaction of his self, he may find some pretexts.

The Contended Self

This is the most sublimated stage of self which is to be achieved by very few persons. Those who have reached this stage, possess extraordinary wisdom and knowledge. Their will power is so strong and ability of action is so enormous that they are the masters of their self and keep away from evil acts. However, they cannot be barred from casual falterings. It is said that men of contented self are also liable to err.

Now a question arises that if prayer sublimates self, then a person of which category of self is profited? It is obvious that men of contented self do not need any further sublimation. So, its usefulness remains for the persons of normal and baser self. But the persons of these two categories of self may only be profited when they perform prayers with all sincerity, concentration of mind and submissiveness. Further, the worshipper may also know about the meanings of words which he is uttering and the act which he is performing. He may be fully confident that the object he is worshipping, is present before him. He is so much inspired during the prayer that he may fall into trance.

Look all around honestly. How many people are there who offer prayers in such a way. Is it not right that, with the exception of very few, all are the slaves of their passions and the possessors of normal and baser self. In their personal lives, they are cheats, frauds, smugglers, bribe-seekers, adulterers, usurpers, thugs, hypocrites and persons of bad conduct, but they offer prayer, deeming it as a formal compulsion. In such a condition, is it not proved that prayer does not reform the conduct of bad persons. It was for this reason that Shah Bahu felt constrained to say:

نفل نماز ان کم زمانہ دے روزے صرفاروئی، ہو
مکے دیول سوئی جاوے گھر دے ہودن ٹوئی، ہو
اچیان بانگان سوئی دیون نیت جنہادی کوئی ہو
کی پرواہ تنہانوں "باہو" جنہان گھر وچ لڈی بوئی ہو

"Prayer is a womanly act. Fasting tantamounts to saving bread. For pilgrimage, only those go to Mecca who are not attached to their homes. A loud call they make who have no fair conscience. Those who have reached the Ultimate Reality, care not for such false shows".

Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai says about it in his unique way:

روزا ۽ نمازون ای پن چگوکم
پراو کو بیونفہم، جنهن سان پیچی پیرن کی

"Fastings and prayers are good acts but the acts which lead to the Ultimate Reality are different".

In this context, Bulla Shah beautifully says:

روزے حج نماز نے مائی
مینوں پیا نیں آں بھلائی،

*"O mother! the false show of fasting, prayer and pilgrim-
age detracted me from the Ultimate Reality".*

3. Prayer Gives Satisfaction to Heart

It is an established fact that at misopportune moments or in a state of sorrow or helplessness, man feels an acute need of help of some supernatural power. At this moment of distress, worship or prayer satiates heart. In this state, very many people approach gods, goddesses, rivers, animals, God and many other objects, entreating them or Him for help. Whether his distress or difficulty is overcome through such entreaties, this is a different matter. But, doubtlessly, one's heart feels satisfied. Worship and prayer are therefore used as sedative, tranquillizer or balm.

But it is also an acknowledged fact that the excessive or ultimately use of a medicine loses its efficacy; and as in case of addiction, a medicine is no longer effective, in the same way, excess of worship and prayer becomes less effective.

4. Prayer Will Ease Salvation

The fourth advantage of prayer is described as salvation. But the idea of the Day of Judgement, as presented by the priest, is not shared by the mystic. The mystic knows

that Heaven, Hell, measure and Doomsday etc. are all symbolic. These symbols are used for making those men righteous who cannot mend their lives without temptation or fear. Such things, as a matter of fact, are non-existent; and worshipping non-existent things is all meaningless. Besides, a mystic is intoxicated with the love of God. His every act is in consonance with the wish of the Beloved and for His love, not for any lust or bargain on the Day of Judgement. For a mystic, worship and prayer are for the sight of the resplendent glow of the Beloved and not for any ulterior gain.

5. Prayer Redeems One From Sin

The fifth advantage of prayer, as claimed by the priest and the exploiter, is neither acceptable to a mystic nor to a truth-knower. They know it that transgressions committed in the society cannot be atoned by prayer. If the contention of the priest is accepted that prayer is the key to salvation, then the divine justice will appear but all ridiculous. Every black-marketeer, black-mailer, smuggler, hoarder, usurper, robber and murderer will hope for the mercy of God if he is regularly praying. Those who hold such a view, are perhaps not aware that God cannot be coaxed or bribed through worship and prayer. Those who have pained or persecuted His creatures in any manner, are sure to be punished.

It is understandable that worships and prayers may be of some use for penance and abstaining from the acts of transgression in future, but what about the past misdeeds? Can God forgive one who has committed heinous crimes and acts of transgression? Through those crimes and transgressions, many innocent suffered during their lives. If God does so, it will be against His justice. In fact, the crimes which are

being committed today, are the result of this distorted and crooked notion. In the present-day world, it is observed that smugglers, black-marketeers, narcotic-dealers and such persons of shady character contribute generously to the building of a mosque or other works of public utility. It is because they are under the impression that such philanthropic acts will lead them to Heaven. A mystic regards such men as hypocrites. It is nothing short of hypocrisy. It was for these hypocrisies that Shah Bahu felt constrained to say:

پڑھ پڑھ علم مشائخ سداون کرن عبادت دوری، هو
اندر جھگی پئی لتیوی، تن من خبر نہ موری، هو
مولا والی سدا سوکالی، دل تون لاه تھکوری، هو
”باھو“ رب تنھان نون حاصل، جنھان جگ نہ کیتی چوری هو

“After reciting the Quran, the reciters become arrogant and the priests pride in their prayers. They flauntly pass through the streets, with books under their arms. Wherever they perceive a chance for their gain, they start reciting the Quran in a loud voice. Bahu sold out all his earnings, both of their worlds were destroyed”.

Other rituals too, very like worship and prayer, have become more conventional and lifeless. The mystic regards all such worship, prayer and rituals as useless. Similarly, pilgrimage, sacrifice of animals, visit to the graves, offerings in the name of the dead, spell and magic are sheer conventions which are of no use.

THE SECOND BELIEF OF A MYSTIC

To a mystic, all human beings appear like a single body

whose different limbs cannot be dissociated from each other. To him, the real humanity is that each man may share the sufferings of another. To compartmentalise humanity into religions, sects, groups and nations is against the Laws of Nature and against the Will of God. A mystic is convinced that the real dignity of man is much higher than the petty differences of caste, creed and colour. Such differences are not only artificial but detrimental too. To quote the words of Shaikh Saadi:

بنی آدم اعضاء یک دیگر اند
که در آفرینش ز یک جوهر اند
چو یک عضو درد آورد روزگار
همه اعضا بارانساند مقرر

"All human beings are different limbs of one and the same body. It is because they are born out of the same substance. As the whole body suffers on account of pain in a limb, in the same way, all human beings should feel the pain of others".

According to the same faith, a Muslim mystic makes a clarion call:

تو برائے وصل کردن آمدی
نے برائے فصل کردن آمدی

"Your existence is for the very purpose of promoting love, brotherhood and unity among the human beings. Don't put them apart by creating prejudice, hatred and

dissension".

That is why the mystics have been conscious of the fact that if religion is allowed to be used politically, then priests will start exploiting the masses. They will grab power and do every unfair thing in the name of God, the Quran and the Holy Prophet. The domination of priest, in the first place, gives undue support to the vested groups; secondly, it obstructs freedom and progress of man. Islam, as the mystic has understood it, has come into existence not to create groups with vested interests, but to uproot evils of all types. Islam considers man as the vicegerent of God and is opposed to every kind of distinction which is made in the name of caste, creed and colour. Islam is the foremost champion of freedom which is the fundamental right of man. Thus, the Muslim mystic is in fact a naturalist and is against every form of restraint and compulsion. This is the reason that many an extremist mystic renounced the world and was out of the sphere of influence of the priest.

The Muslim mystic considers all the formal and exhibitive affairs of all religions as useless. He has therefore no concern with them. He always endeavours to delve into the inner spirit of religion, ignoring thereby its outer form. To him, intellect and love are the two facets of one and the same image. For his guidance and for the guidance of others, he tries to seek refuge in intellect and love. Nothing else attracts him, nor does he need any other thing. The mystic likes not to be attached to such petty and conventional things which have lost their value. Thus, he is progressive in outlook. Instead, he likes new things to be in vogue which are the demand of the time. He perceives Nature as ever-moving, ever-changing and revolutionary. Therefore, it is necessary to keep pace with the change. Nothing is static or morbid for him. Since everything is moving, therefore, it is living. The mystic perceives each moment the sun, the moon, the earth, the stars, and the pla-

nets in motion. Further, the weatheric change, the blow of wind and the flow of water convince him of the eternal evolutionary process. His eyes scan human beings, animals and plants coming into existence; then growing with the passage of time; and finally, decaying. Other human beings, animals and plants replace the former ones. However, except God, nothing is eternal. How can one be expected to believe in a static being or a system, who has closely watched the system of eternal change?

This is the reason that when a ruler or a priest commands a mystic either to do or not to do a thing in the name of God or the Holy Prophet, he gets at the bottom of the intention hidden in the command. To the mystic, such a command is a sheer artifice which, on the one hand, reflects dictatorial attitude; on the other hand, it is motivated by lust for personal gain. A mystic is therefore a rebel. He construes truth as much within the reach of everyone as sunshine or air. No individual, group or nation has a right to monopolise truth. His fundamental principles rest on the basis of life and death. He is fully conscious of the secrets of life and believes in:

موجیم کہ آسودگی ماعدم ہاست
مازندہ بہ آئیم کہ آرام نہ گیریم

*"That life is like a wave. In movement, lies its existence.
When the movement ceases, it no longer exists".*

THE THIRD BELIEF OF THE MYSTIC

As stated earlier, a Muslim mystic is convinced that the combination of religion and politics is absolutely wrong. In his opinion, religion springs from within, it cannot be imposed from outside. It is therefore the personal affair of an individual. When a person is individually born, he also dies individually; for his good deeds or misdeeds he himself is accountable in life; for his faith, he is supposed to be questioned on the Day of Judgement; then how far others are justified in interfering in his faith and imposing their own faith on him? Therefore, the mystic regards that every individual is free in matter of his belief and may follow any religion according to his wisdom, intellect, wish, liking and experience. The mystic reposes full faith in the following verse of the Book of God:

“لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ”

“There should be no compulsion in matter of belief. Different and distinct is the path of guidance”.

To sum up, a Muslim mystic believes in non-violence. Whether it be politics or religion, thought or action, he finds non-violence to be applied in all the affairs of life. Thus, he deems all religions as right paths. One who, despite the apparent diversity, adds to the grace and strengthens the basic unity, perceives the Light (of God). It does not matter which religion or sect he belongs to or which ideology he upholds. But one who gets entangled in the petty differences of religions or sects, goes astray from that Light. Therefore, the mystics have endeavoured in many ways to unify religions. A few examples are given as under:

Two Interpretations of Islam

1. Shaikh Badruddin Samawa tried to cohere Islam and Christianity in Turkey.
2. In India, Bhagat Kabir and Guru Nanak left no stone unturned in welding together Hinduism and Islam.
3. In India, Raja Ram Mohan Roy did a lot for cementing ties between Hinduism and Christianity.
4. Hung Sio Chian made concerted efforts in China to bring Taoism and Christianity together.
5. In India, the famous Moghul emperor, Akbar the Great, tried his best to create uniformity among the Islam, the Hinduism, the Jainism, the Christianity and the Fire-worship.
6. Dara Shikoh, a great Moghul prince, endeavoured to put together the collective values of all religions.
7. In Sind, the great saints such as Sachal Sarmast and Shah Enayat fought against the religious and sectarian hatred as well as prejudice.

Such efforts were made all over the world and in all times. This is a glaring proof that the mystics are fundamentally and universally the friends of mankind.

THE FOURTH BELIEF OF THE MYSTIC

Equality of man is the fourth belief of a mystic. To prefer a group of persons or to regard them as superior beings on the basis of religion or sect is contrary to the belief of the mystic. Therefore, he considers priesthood (Mullahism) as a curse. The following verses of the Holy Quran support his views:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا

"The upright ones and men of good conduct are dear to God".

"Those who profess faith and give good account of their actions, they deserve perpetual happiness and bliss".

This is the reason that the mystic regards every good-natured and simple-minded Muslim as a true Muslim. At the same time, he regards every self-seeker, intriguer and hypocrite as a non-Muslim, whatever be the apparent faith of such a person. Therefore, according to the same principle, he is against any preferential treatment or domination of the traditional Muslims.

THE FIFTH BELIEF OF A MYSTIC

The mystic does not distinguish between Islam and infidelity on the basis of "formal Islam and rejection of formal Islam". His belief is that the values of Islam and that of infidelity which are according to the divine will and the dictates of Nature, are as under:

Islam	Infidelity
Selflessness	Selfishness
Accord	Discord
Love	Hatred
Non-Violence	Force and Violence
Humanism	Narrow Sectarianism

The values which Islam sanctions and which are held dear by the mystics, are already explained in the pages of this book. I shall therefore keep confined here to the values nurtured by infidelity.

Selfishness

To a mystic, each such thought or action which creates

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distinction between man and man, thereby advocating on the one hand for the preferential rights or vested interests of a group of individuals and usurping the legitimate rights of other people, is nothing but selfishness. In the same way, any such thing which gives undue advantage to a certain sect or group is nothing short of selfishness. Further, the use of force for the acceptance of a certain belief, is a sordid show of selfishness. Similarly, any such thing by which a certain nation or tribe thrives at the cost of others, is all selfishness.

Discord

According to the belief of mystic, only God has the real existence. All other beings and objects are subjected to decay. It is therefore absolutely wrong to regard diversity as reality. It is equally wrong to create any such distinction. On the basis of this belief, he feels that any prejudice or hatred created in the name of religion or sect, is a heinous crime.

Islam is fundamentally a religion of peace. Any such thing which becomes a bone of contention between sects, groups, tribes and nations is against the very spirit of Islam. It is all infidelity. The Muslim priest may howsoever try to draw inferences from the Holy Quran so as to serve his vested interests, but the fact remains that it is contrary to the real spirit and message of Islam.

Hatred

Fundamentally and essentially, a mystic is the worshipper of love. His whole existence is for the fulfilment of a noble objective — love. It is the alpha and omega in his life. Love is life and hatred is death. Thus, any such thought or action which impedes the message of love or which creates a gulf

among individuals, sects or men of different religious denominations, is nothing but hatred. Such a hatred is unjust even if it is created in the name of God.

Where love exists, there is no place for hatred. The mystic therefore deems hatred to be the root-cause of all evils. Honestly speaking, hatred is that fire which burns everything. It creates a gulf between man and man. It leads to bloodshed and destruction. Therefore, in the eyes of a mystic, love, natural religion and law of evolution are one and the same thing. Similarly, hatred, hypocrisy, obscurantism and infidelity are one and the same. That's why the mystic voices against the Muslim priest when he perceives the latter sowing the seed of hatred and discord:

محبت سنڌي مام، ڪورپورٽي ڪين ٿي.

"Vested interests have blinded him. He can neither understand love nor its demands".

Force and Violence

Plainly speaking, a mystic is against every form of hatred, prejudice, aggression, force, coercion and violence. He considers each of them as an evil of the worst form. These evils not only negate love which is the very essence of the creation and existence of man, but they throttle humanism too. The mystic therefore wishes such a society to blossom in which:

- a) There exists no distinction between the rich and the poor.
- b) There exists no distinction in the interests of the rulers and the ruled.
- c) There exists no distinction among men on the basis of

caste, creed and colour.

- d) Everyone should be free in respect of his personal belief.
- e) There should be no clash of interest among the individuals, sects or groups of individuals.

Therefore, co-existence is the word which the mystic has adopted as his mode of life. Another cardinal principle of his life is religious toleration. These too constitute as the very edifice of humanism. To sum up, he wants the following verse of the Holy Quran translated into action all around the world:

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ

"Verily, for you is your religion; for me is my religion".

Chapter 5

MYSTICISM – AS I UNDERSTOOD

The word 'tasawwuf' meaning 'mysticism' in English, has been in vogue in the Muslim society for a pretty long time. But the set of beliefs, objectives and mode of life for which the Muslims employed this word, have been used for almost the same purpose by men of other religions too, though of course with different names. Throughout different ages, the philosophers, scholars and men of letters have worked and contributed a lot to the field of mysticism all over the world. The following are the names of those scholars or the schools of thought which they belonged to:

1. Plato (the protagonist of the philosophy of Idealism), Neo-Platonic thinkers, Spinoza and other philosophers.
2. Vedantic saints.
3. Unity-loving Christians, the world-renouncing Christian clergy and the stoics.
4. Some of the Buddhist monks.
5. Some of the Jainist monks.
6. The Muslim mystics who were the believers in the Unity

of God (Wahdat-ul-Wajud).

7. Theosophists.

8. Modern humanists.

9. Kindred men or organizations trying to promote spiritualism.

A large number of the Muslim thinkers have regarded Tasawwuf (mysticism) as the philosophy of Islam, the spirit of Islam, the religion of love, the creed for the sublimation of self and the mode of self-revelation. But some thinkers have leapt one step farther and have defined mysticism as Islam itself. In the same way, eminent men of other religions have extolled and practised it.

But it is a fact, that as religions unfortunately degenerated owing to the bad conduct of their followers; similarly, mysticism lost much of its lustre. As the Muslim priest lays much of stress on the conventional religion and justifies all the means so long as his coffers are being filled and his opponents are being crushed; in the same way, majority of the so-called mystics are lost in the morass of mundane life. Some among them are the men who have also gone astray. Their vested interests are of paramount importance to them. They try their best to roll into comfort and luxury of life, but preach to the masses about contentment, forbearance and dependence on God. Some of these so-called mystics have further debased themselves by converting the august institution of mysticism into sheer professionalism. The malady has become so acute that magical incantation, exhortation of the evil spirits and black magic are being treated as parts of mysticism.

The way the educated young men in our country are feeling disgusted with religion as a result of the exploitation of Islam at the hands of the Muslim priests and obscurantists; in a similar way, mysticism too appears to have lost its charm and appeal. For example, guide-worship (pir-

parasti), fake miracles, sheer lust in the name of beauty-worship, sluggishness in the name of the renunciation of world, total absence of self-sublimation, complete lack of self-recognition and economic exploitation are some of the curses which the self-styled and self-seeking mystics have initiated. The result is that people have become apathetic to it and the very institution of mysticism has become a misnomer.

As stated in the preceding chapters of this book, I have laid much emphasis on these objectives which are of fundamental value. In these very objectives, to my mind, lies hidden the collective gain of the entire human race. These objectives are: unity, peace and prosperity of mankind. I have reflected for a very long time as to how and from which pool to gather men who wish to work for the promotion of these objectives. Beyond doubt, the interpretation of real Islam was sufficient for me. But, unfortunately, so defamed has been the interpretation of the Muslim priest that if I adopt Islam as an instrument for removing the ills of the society, men belonging to other religions are sure to object. This is the reason that I have chosen mysticism as the medium for the promotion of these values. I am confident that, despite the falterings of some of the so-called mystics of the present times, it is very likely to enjoy a universal appeal and will draw people from all over the world.

I am not interested in a particular name. But as ideas can only be communicated through words and symbols, that is why I have selected "mysticism" as a cure for all the present problems and ills of mankind. In the modern metaphor, mysticism can be defined as humanism. In my opinion, the foundations of mysticism can be laid on the following great ideals:

1. The concepts of the Unity of God (Wahdat-ul-Wajud) under which the Power in the universe is God. All other things are His reflections alone. But this thought dem-

ands a lot of circumspection because, extremism may prove to be misleading. For example, if practical life is taken in terms of delusion of sight, many people are likely to renounce the world. It will lead to chaos and confusion in the society. It is also against the will of God and the law of evolution.

Another result that may be obtained from this extremist concept that the 'right' and the 'wrong', the 'good' and the 'bad' and the 'oppressor' and the 'oppressed' be treated as one and the same. Thus, all the distinctions be eliminated. It too will prove ruinous for the society. The Law of Nature and purpose of life also negate such a tendency. According to the demand of the law of evolution, every part has to be integrated with the whole. When the noble ideals of life have come to be established as unity, peace and progress of mankind; for the achievement of these ideals, proper education, sublimation of self and good moral conduct are the requisites.

2. Another glaring principle of mysticism is that the Real and the Absolute be thought much beyond human imagination and thinking. Such a belief is sure to relieve men of the concept of personal and impersonal God. The concept of personal God leads to idol-worship while the concept of impersonal God leads to Duality.
3. The third important principle of mysticism is the study of the plan of creation of the universe and its system. Without it, the creed of mysticism remains incomplete. If the prevailing condition in the world is to be examined, one will know that in major parts of the world, there is confusion worse confounded. There is no justice, no equality, no equitability in the distribution of wealth. For example:
 - a) Despite hard labour, millions of men are deprived of necessary food, clothing and shelter. On the other hand,

a handful of people have control over the entire wealth and means of production in the world. Thus, without labour, they are living in luxury.

- b) Very many people are born with robust health and they die at mature age. But there are still many who are congenitally weak or diseased. Throughout their lives, they remain physically or mentally diseased. Some lose their limbs as a result of accidents or serious ailments. Thus, they are exposed to sufferings and have pre-mature deaths.
- c) On the one hand, tall talks are made about refinement and good culture; on the other hand, horrible wars are waged in which not only valuable lives are lost, but property is also damaged. Brute power is let loose in its worst form. All moral values are reduced to a naught.
- d) A few men are handsome while many are ugly. Some are men of intellect but many are devoid of even common sense; some are kind-hearted and friendly to human beings, while a large number of men, are hard-hearted and enemical to others.

In view of this contrast in human nature, there are people who feel compelled to think that if this universe had come into being under a plan, its system would have been based on justice and harmony, making no room for much chaos and confusion. But, on the other hand, the design of the universe manifests that there is a designer. You may call that designer by any name. The movement of the stars and the planets within their orbits; the day followed by the night and the night followed by the day; the change in seasons; the procreation of the living beings and their decay after a certain period of time; the change of water into vapours and the metamorphosis of vapours into snow are some of the glaring proofs that there does exist a force.

The order and disorder to be found in this world or the universe lead to two concepts. One of them is that although

the forces of 'good' and 'evil' keep on perpetually conflicting with each other, yet there is a plan and a purpose in the creation of the universe. The other concept is that the creation of the universe is the result of an accident and, therefore, everything as such is accidental.

The mystics believing in the Unity of God (Wahdat-ul-Wajud) have thought over both the theories. But they have not wholly accepted either of them. They have also acknowledged the plan in the creation of the universe and yet they have perceived the absolute good inherent in the law of evolution. Some of them have looked askance at the disorder prevailing in this world, considering it as the inscrutable way of God. But some have regarded these disorderly conditions as purely temporary. According to their beliefs, this disorder is not to last in future.

But in this whole affair, one thing is explicitly clear that the negative attitude which is developed owing to the disorderly conditions and the sufferings of mankind is the result of the personal concept of God. According to this concept, each event is caused by pleasure or anger of God. The same personal concept of God gives birth to the belief about Heaven and Hell, miracles and supernatural elements. The priests regard themselves as the agents of God. Their will is God's will and, on this plea, they start meddling into the mundane and spiritual affairs of people. In this way, the concept of divine justice becomes mere mockery. Since the mystic does not believe in the concept of a personal God, therefore he regards all such concepts and beliefs not in keeping with reality.

4. To regard the whole human race as a single body, is the fourth important principle of mysticism. According to this principle, he considers all human beings as equal with regard to their rights and treatment despite the fact that they differ in their nature and, at the same time, heterogeneous are their languages, cultures, colour, races,

religions and ideas.

The mystic occupies such a lofty place in matter of love that he finds all the distinctions of faith as superficial. As from a flying plane, different objects appear to have been shrunk on the surface of the earth, but these objects appear integrated with each other. In the same way, all the distinctions and differences of men appear to a mystic as different parts of a single whole. Therefore, he wishes to see the whole humanity tied into the bond of love and fraternity.

5. The fifth important principle of mysticism is the unity of all religions. Believing in the unity of mankind, the Muslim mystic finds at the background of all religions a coherence and a unifying force. To the faithlessness and faith, he considers as two branches of one and the same stem. He holds a different view from that of a Muslim priest in this connection. The priest denounces other religions and sects, declaring them as infidels. But the mystic regards all the religions and sects alike. For him, atheism is certainly different from religion. But again, he considers atheism and religion as the two facets of the same form. To him, religion stands for as the messenger of evolution and atheism as the standard-bearer of revolution. Thus, both lead to the same goal, although there is much difference in their methodology.
6. To regard knowledge and love as the real spirit of religion, is the sixth important principle of mysticism. For him, love is the nexus which creates understanding and harmony among men, promoting thereby fellow-feeling and peace on the universal plane. Knowledge leads men to the path of progress. It is only through love and knowledge that the feelings of prejudice, hatred, selfishness and egotism can be overcome. In this way, peace, progress and prosperity can be achieved.

7. The seventh important principle of mysticism is respect for culture. A true Muslim mystic is essentially a man of feelings. But he never neglects intellect. Therefore, he tries to make the maximum use of intellect and feelings. Through both, he wants to humanise and discipline human beings. He likes all such which falls within the purview of modern culture. As the mystic is progressive in outlook, he wishes the society to move forward with every passing moment. He is therefore always imbued with the spirit of constructing things anew. He hates all that which is stagnating and morbid in life and society.

For the achievement of these objectives, the mystic has dedicated his life. He wants to capture the hearts of men through love. Except the language of love, he uses no other language. He has a particular sphere of work which gives its desired result in an atmosphere of co-existence. The mystic is of the view that human society has reached such a stage of evolution where all the state affairs should be subordinated to the elected and democratic governments. In the state affairs, no religious or sectarian group should be allowed to play its dirty role.

The mystic also holds this view that every individual should be free with regard to his faith and belief. It is not the duty of a state either to propagate or safeguard any particular faith. Any intervention on the part of the state or religion or sect in the personal belief of an individual is infringement on human right and liberty. In the same way, the mystic is an exponent of non-violence. He does not approve the use of brute force because violence breeds violence. To a mystic, bloody revolution is of no significance because any such thing which is achieved through fear, is not lasting.

The mystic is all against selfishness. In fact, selfishness is the product of the baser spirit. It makes man lowly and

mean. It gives birth to the idea of Duality. Egotism and self-centredness evoke violence and lend support to imperialism and capitalism. They create hatred and dissension among men. Egotism also gives birth to such misleading ideas as high and low, superior and inferior. Thus, it paves the way for non-equality. The mystic therefore condemns it.

To the mystic, nothing is of greater importance than a sound and healthy society. Music, dancing, poetry, literature and all that which make a society healthy and stable, are therefore the requisite ingredients. Similarly, he does not consider that truth is the monopoly of a particular religious or sectarian group or of a particular tribe or nation. He is therefore non-aligned. He, therefore, does not believe in blindly following a particular religious, economic or political ideology. In the last, the mystic is totally against such a state which claims to profess or propagate a certain faith or belief. It leads to fascism and decays soon. These are the cardinal principles of mysticism which, if adopted, can change the present strife-torn world into a much better and happier place.

